

The Sex Doll

A HISTORY



Anthony Ferguson

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PREFACE

It may come as a surprise that there is very little serious literature available on the origins of sex dolls, yet the idea of creating an ideal love object has recurred frequently in writings since ancient times. It is almost as if this theme represents some dark and secret hidden quest surreptitiously undertaken on behalf of men by other men, to create a woman who is perfectly controlled, silent and obedient.

In some ways this is understandable. From the germ of male desire sprang the urge to create something which was female in appearance, but completely receptive and non-judgmental. Yet getting men to talk about this secret desire is another matter, or at least it was until recently. Little has been written about sex dolls from their origins as cloth or sack effigies (*dames de voyage*) utilized by randy sailors on lengthy and lonely sea journeys to their sudden reappearance on the periphery of popular culture around the 1970s as inflatable dolls.

Recently, the development of a global communications network in conjunction with vast improvements in computer-generated imagery (CGI) and other post-industrial technologies improved the quality of humanoid reproduction. As a consequence, public interest in the artificial women surged as they suddenly went very high tech and became exceptionally realistic. Now it seems that sex doll aficionados no longer keep silent. The Internet has given them both anonymity and a plethora of like-minded individuals with whom to compare their doll experiences.

The chapters in this book trace the genesis of the sex doll from its original conception as an ideal love object to the robotic effigies which are now becoming more readily available via the Internet, with an emphasis on female dolls. The book also exposes the psychology behind the persistent desire for gynoids and other non-responding sexual partners. It is my firm belief that academic interest in sex dolls, sex doll technology and the psychology of their users will become much more widespread as the gap between dolls and what would properly be called androids continues to close.

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Men are simple creatures who only want access to physical beauty and will do and say anything to get it. They are not to be trusted. — Clive Robertson

Those historical artifacts known colloquially as marital aids have a long history, and among them few are as bizarre as the fornicatory doll, commonly known as the sex doll. The concept of creating an artificial being to use as a companion or sexual partner or both has been with us since ancient times, yet for much of its history, the sex doll has hovered on the margins of polite society. It was a literary and scientific aberration, frowned upon and hence suppressed by a society under the moral yoke of the church, and later a novelty item foisted upon the sexually uninitiated as a college prank. It was the consort of the lonely and desperate. The sex doll remained an enigma, the doll and its function little discussed. The earliest sex dolls could only be advertised by word of mouth or pamphlets distributed in places frequented exclusively by men, such as barber shops, taverns and bordellos. Later they would appear in the sex shops which evolved as a corollary to red light districts in major cities.

However, all this changed on the cusp of the new millennium when advances in cybernetics and global communications technology brought the newly reconstructed sex doll out of the closet. Suddenly the sex doll was the in thing. Radio shock jocks loudly praised their charms over the airwaves, and sex dolls were the subject of documentaries and feature films, the unexpected if momentary darling of Hollywood. While this mainstream interest will undoubtedly fade, being just another symptom of the post-industrial fascination with technological fads, it is evident that the sex doll is here to stay. More significantly, the sex doll in its current guise seems to be moving inexorably closer to becoming a fully functioning gynoid, or feminized android. In doing so, it appears to have arrived at the threshold of the boundary between pleasure and science.

I am greatly interested in the ethical questions posed by these objects.

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On one hand they are a harmless and sometimes humorous masturbatory outlet, fulfilling a function on the margins of human sexual behavior. Yet at the same time, when considered in terms of the progress being made in sex doll technology, and the level of investment and consumer interest, by implication their very existence is a potential threat to the future of human biological relationships. This latter point is evidenced by the application of new technologies to the construction of artificial sex partners. Several companies in first world nations are pouring large sums of money into developing ever more lifelike sex dolls. Will this inexorable appropriation of new technology create a breed of robotic sex slaves? It remains to be seen whether a topic widely covered in the science fiction genre will become a reality.

The very longevity of interest in sex dolls attests to their popularity, somewhere on the periphery of sexual paraphernalia. Sex dolls are not necessarily cheap. At the time of this writing, a mid-range sex doll of the type readily available in sex shops would retail at around \$300, while the latest dolls made with advanced cyber technology sell over the Internet for somewhere around \$8,000. However, it is likely that the price will gradually decrease as they become cheaper to produce, and the market for them becomes saturated. At the moment they are still somewhat a novelty, their usage restricted to a small but slowly expanding market of like-minded individuals who buy the dolls and converse over the Internet. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the realms of cyberspace are home to a whole sub-culture of people who are drawn to the concept of sexual interaction with robots or machines. Known collectively as technosexuals, these are the people who are pushing the boundaries of sexuality away from the biological and toward the mechanical, and there will be more of them in the generations to come as robotic technology becomes more commonplace and widespread, and as people become used to the idea of robots being part of their everyday lives.

Ultimately, whichever avenue I chose to explore in my assessment of sex dolls, my research seemed to draw me back toward one central theme. Perhaps the key to their continued success is the notion of control. Human sexual relationships have always been problematic. From the beginning of organized society men have made a conscious effort to control the female sex drive. Female sexuality has at times been interpreted as a threat to the sense of the masculine order and discipline of patriarchal rule. Unrestricted

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female sexuality is linked in the male psyche to the fall from grace precipitated by Eve in the Garden of Eden and later subsumed under the literary and philosophical construct of the mother/whore dichotomy. In short, it threatens chaos. Woman is nature to man's culture, and the mystery of her sexual parts must be explored, categorized, restrained, and kept under control at all costs.

Following along these lines it is my contention that the female sex doll represents woman in her most objectified form. The female sex doll is man's ultimate sexually idealized woman. It is never more than the sum of its fully functional parts. A woman rendered harmless, it is immobile, compliant, and perhaps most importantly, silent. What the user of the sex doll seeks is the negation of change and the comfort of always retaining control of the relationship. Most of us accept the importance of change in terms of our personal growth. We understand that we need to adapt to meet challenges and face the reality of a fluctuating social world. This is how we develop emotionally, by interacting with others also subject to the same pressures. Yet the relationship between men and their dolls is stagnant, and obviously one-sided. Perhaps the real function of the sex doll is to provide a simulacrum—a representation, an image, a semblance (of reality), a phantom, or a sham. The sex doll offers verisimilitude, the appearance of truth. The aim of the image is to displace reality. The evidence suggests that there are those who would prefer a simulacrum to living flesh, just as there are those who seek mute subjugation in the sexual partner. These aberrant desires seem to have their basis in fear. What I hope to uncover are the reasons for these fears, specifically the fear of resistance to masculine desire, the fear of female sexuality, the fear of change, and the fear of death, all as they are related to the history of the sex doll.

The present work is an exploration of the development of the sex doll, from its beginnings as a fantasy of ancient men to its present lifelike state. It is also a study of the type of thinking which led to the concept of an ideal woman, a study of why men would want to "improve" on nature, and an assessment of the many ways men conceive of women as objects of desire.

Chapter One, "The Origin of the Species," traces the germ of the idea which led to the modern sex doll. It begins by investigating the sexual fascination with artificial representations of the human form in ancient times. It analyzes all of the terminology relating to this phenomenon, and sketches the early history and mythology of the sex doll.

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The second chapter, “She Ain’t Heavy, She’s Just Rubber,” outlines the genesis of the inflatable sex doll, from the European prototypes of the immediate post-war period to the appearance of inflatable dolls in the late twentieth century. It examines the vast range of inflatable dolls on the market and the use of new materials and technologies to create ever improved models. There is a discussion of the manufactured pose of the inflatable doll and what it signifies culturally, and a reflection upon the enduring popularity of the sex doll.

Chapter Three, “The Great Leap Forward,” examines how Hollywood led the drive toward greater realism in human replicas, how entrepreneurs suddenly realized the potential market in sex dolls, and how the Internet helped the industry to grow exponentially by offering anonymity. It discusses the phenomenon of Matt McMullen, the Dr. Frankenstein of the sex doll industry with his RealDoll, and charts the growth of the market for the new, improved sex dolls in the United States and Japan, and the growing significance of realism as a selling point.

Next, “I Am Your Automatic Lover” investigates how technology historically has been geared toward making our lives easier and how this notion of convenience and the disposability of material possessions becomes conflated with sex and notions of sexuality. It discusses how sex becomes automated and reduced to an act of expediency. This discussion is expanded into an assessment of cybersex in all its guises, teledildonics and robotics, sex with machines and robot fetishism. It also considers the impact of pornography on the Internet and how it has crept inexorably into mainstream society without most of us noticing.

Chapter Five, “Forever Young,” looks at the historical development of dolls and their impact on human culture, and assesses Freud’s notion of the uncanny and its application to dolls in light of the psychological impact of early automatons on society. The discussion is expanded to consider men’s desire to impose a doll-like quality on women in the quest for eternal youth and beauty. It discusses how these ideals encourage a fear of aging and death and change, and how beauty surgery is representative of man’s desire to control women and their sexuality.

Chapter Six, “Consumable Women,” looks at the various ways in which society dresses women up as objects and positions them for the appraisal of the masculine gaze. It dissects the electronic media and particularly advertising — how it addresses women as objects or commodities,

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how it imposes a form of sexual slavery on them, how women become sexualized dolls and how their voice is marginalized and silenced. It also examines the way in which dominant state apparatuses have tried to control sexuality because it is unproductive and therefore a threat to the capitalist work ethic.

Chapter Seven, "Sex Doll Stereotypes," demonstrates how certain types of women or certain female-dominated professions are marketed in a similar manner to sex dolls. A psychological comparison is made between the sex doll and the prostitute, the pornographic film actress, the mistress, and the mail-order bride, and how all these stereotypes occupy similar roles of subjugation within the patriarchal hierarchy. It also examines the development of the mannequin and its eventual sexualization as an object of desire.

Chapter Eight, "The Vagaries of Masculine Desire," begins to assess the psychology behind the desire for artificial and non-responsive sexual partners. Looking at this from every angle, it considers the healthful and spiritual benefits of the sex doll, convenience, cost, and the reasons some users might avoid contact with real sexual partners, such as the fear of women's sexuality, the fear of intimacy and the fear of rejection. It provides survey responses from actual users of sex dolls. It also considers the notion of women as "the other," as objects of violent conquest.

The ninth chapter, "The Darker Side of Desire," examines the many facets of sexual control through violence, and suggests that control of the other is an expression of power. It explores how masculine domination and the subjugation of women is expressed via rape, lust, murder and necrophilia, and how the victims in these scenarios are like sex dolls, completely restrained and silenced. The chapter shows how sex crimes are a further extension of man's desire to control women.

"Do Androids Dream of Electric Orgasm?" looks at the concept of artificial partners like dolls and robots in literature, film, documentaries, music, and art, and traces the gradual increase in cultural references to these objects. It suggests that this is occurring as a result of the rapid advances in technology now being applied to the sex doll industry and the widespread access to immediate information afforded by global communications networks. This in turn is increasing popular awareness of sex dolls.

The eleventh and final chapter, "Revulsion, Lust and Love," examines

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the changing perceptions of men's relationships with artificial partners. It analyzes the mental leap doll users have taken from the horror of the uncanny to the seeming inevitability of accepting artificially intelligent beings as our friends, lovers, and perhaps even spouses. It explores the ethics of love and sex with dolls and gynoids, and considers the potential impact of the introduction of emotions such as empathy on human-gynoid relationships.

The book concludes with a comment on the tendency toward isolation and self-determination in the post-industrial world as a result of the global impact of technology, and discusses how gynoids will increasingly come to fill the void left by the lessening of human social interaction.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Definitions and Terms of Reference

Sex dolls form part of the pornographic cornucopia currently available on the sex toy market and are generally regarded by casual observers with a great deal of mirth. After all, the very notion of a man or woman copulating with one would seem to indicate loneliness or desperation on the part of the user. However, there is more to sex dolls than meets the eye. The object of this book is to examine these sex toys from every possible angle — medical, practical, psychological, philosophical and political — to try and comprehend just what it is that makes them so durable, not just in a practical sense, but in terms of popularity.

These strange objects go by a number of different names most commonly sex dolls or fornicatory dolls, and their purpose is to provide an artificial representation of the human body for sexual usage. Historically they were obtained by word of mouth, or by access to underground catalogs made available to gentlemen in specifically masculine settings such as barber shops, tailor shops, back rooms, dram shops, bars and bordellos, perhaps even prisons. By the early 1970s, sex dolls were commonly found in the new sex shops in the red light districts of the modern major cities. In the twenty-first century, sex dolls can be purchased with anonymous ease on the Internet.

A sex doll is best described as any object replicating an ideal object of lust with the necessary apertures or attachments to allow for genital penetration. These dolls are available on most continents and are mostly produced in the United States, Europe and Asia. Female sex dolls are also sometimes referred to as gynoids (manufactured imitations of women). The gynoid, from the Greek prefix *gyne* (woman) is the feminine robotic equivalent of the male android. However, while the term gynoid literally refers to a female robot, an automaton that looks and behaves like a woman, in relation to sex dolls it is defined as an object of sexual fantasy, a male-produced fantasy figure designed to passively accept the desires of men.¹

According to British writer Brenda Love, in her *Encyclopedia of*

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Unusual Sex Practices, sex dolls are used as “a third person for group sex, the cold partner for a necrophile, same sex partner, and consensual partner for spanking, coprophilia or S/M where a submissive is commanded to have sex with the doll. However, they are most often used as jokes.²

Sex dolls are also popular with those who lack the means or self esteem to initiate or conduct relations with another living being. Yet on another level there may be a more insidious use of these objects. It is likely that the desire for absolute control over the sex partner plays an important role in the use of sex dolls. We should also keep in mind that sexual penetration is not always the sole reason for purchase of this type of doll. For some consumers, just owning and having power over an accurate representation of another being is enough. This type of user may want to play dress up with the doll, or just look at it and enjoy its beauty. For some users, the article may look like or represent an actual person over whom they wish to have dominion, or like a loved one they have lost. In this instance, the doll provides comfort, standing in for the individual it represents.

A related accessory to the sex doll is an object known as a penetration toy. Like inflatable sex dolls, these are most commonly found in sex shops or on the Internet, in the form of disembodied or dissociated parts of the human body, most commonly as mouths or vaginas. Quite often these items are modeled on a particular pornographic film star. These objects are sometimes powered electronically or by pump or battery, and are used in conjunction with water or some other form of lubrication for masturbatory purposes.

It is useful to begin this assessment of the history and meaning of the sex doll with a definition of terms, in particular those pertaining to the use of artificial or non-consenting sexual partners. A wide range of sexual practices are related in some way to the use of artificial sex partners.

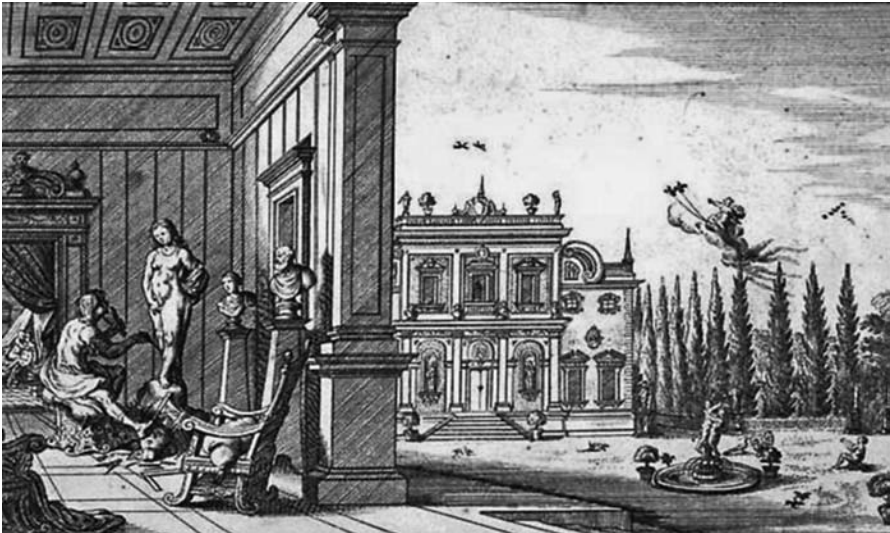
Androidism is the common term to describe seeking cohabitation with or an attraction to an artificial partner. This type of fetish most likely revolves around the notion of control of the sexual partner, in the sense that an android would probably have some sort of mechanism allowing it to be switched on and off. This type of relationship between humans and androids is remarkably common in the literary and cinematic genre, and has been illustrated in many feature films such as *Metropolis*, *The Stepford Wives*, *Blade Runner*, *Cherry 2000* and *Bicentennial Man*. On another level, those attracted to androids might also be drawn to the physical and

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metaphorically emotional coldness of the object itself. As we shall examine in detail later, it may be the inhumanity of the android, even its very mechanical structure, which evokes a sexual charge among its devotees.

There are also several loosely related paraphilia which have links to androidism and the use of sex dolls. One such fetish is known as agalmatophilia, galateism, Pygmalionism, or statuophilia. As the latter name suggests, this refers to those who develop a physical arousal toward statues or mannequins.³ This is a reasonably common type of fetish, and women are just as readily subject to it as men. In ancient times, worshipers of the god Priapus (he of the enormous phallus) would enact rituals in which virginal women would line up to be deflowered by a statue of the god.⁴ Some of these ancient statues had detachable phalluses, which is perhaps where the idea of the dildo originated.

Many of these definitive terms originated in literary classics. Pygmalion, for example, was a mythical Cypriot king who sculpted his ideal woman from a slab of ivory. Her name was Galatea. Upon observing Pyg-



The origins of man's desire for the perfect love object date back to the ancient world, as demonstrated by the myth of Pygmalion and the statue of Galatea, here represented in Johann Baur's engraving *The Story of Pygmalion and the Statue* (1717), from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

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malion's misery at the inertness of his love object, the goddess Aphrodite took pity on him and brought the statue to life. Pygmalion was thus able to consummate his love for this perfect object of desire made flesh. This story was reinterpreted in the early twentieth century by George Bernard Shaw in the play *Pygmalion* (1916), and again in the 1956 feature film *My Fair Lady*, then again at the turn of the millennium in the teen film *She's All That* (1999). This is just one of many variations of the same theme which recur in our literary history. This particular myth can be seen to imply man's desire to impose his own will on nature to perfect an ideal woman. Yet, as we shall see, in doing so, he dehumanizes her and reduces her to an object of consumption.

Perhaps the original story of the creation of and control over life by mortals is found in the legend of Prometheus. Tasked by Zeus with creating man from clay, Prometheus despaired when he saw his creation abandoned to its suffering by the gods. Accordingly, the rebellious Prometheus stole the gift of fire from Olympus and gave it to mortals. From there sprung all enlightenment and human endeavor. Man came to dominate the world and thereby threaten the authority of the gods.

Another related fetish is that of amaurophilia, or more accurately somnophilia. This paraphilia refers to those who are only aroused by a sleeping or non-responsive partner. According to Brenda Love, some individuals develop this particular fetish as a result of having covert sex with a sleeping sibling when sharing the same bed in childhood.⁵ An individual who becomes conditioned to this sort of sexual activity is likely to become impotent when faced with a normal sexual relationship. Date rape assaults on young women when men slip Rohypnol or other narcotic substances into their drinks can have origins in somnophilia and the desire for a non-responding partner, although in the overwhelming majority of cases, the purpose is the ease of overpowering and controlling the victim. The drug serves to replace the gun, the knife, the force, allowing the rapist to commit the crime with less chance of being caught.

The use of sex dolls also has links to other, more disturbing, sexual fetishes, from mild bondage and discipline to necrophilia to sex crimes like rape and lust murder. Once again, these paraphilia have their basis in the perpetrator's inability to sustain a normal sexual relationship with a fully functioning partner, and his fear of emasculation, ridicule, rejection, and particularly the loss of power or control. The psychology behind this

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type of behavior is a desire to dominate the sex partner. If we consider that the sex drive is stimulated by our imagination rather than by a mere Pavlovian biological response to an ovulating female as occurs in the animal kingdom, then we may begin to appreciate how the brain can become conditioned to respond to certain conditions. As our imagination develops, we begin to form patterns of erotic association. When these patterns form between disparate objects, we have the basis of a sexual peccadillo, or a perversion. Hence the eroticism of the non-responding partner is expressed by a sexual attraction to a sleeping body, a restrained body, a doll, a mannequin, a statue, a robot, or even a corpse. If such an exposure occurs at an incipient stage of sexual and emotional development, an individual may become conditioned to that sort of arousal and seek to repeat the event. Eventually, they convince themselves that only by repeating the same experience will they achieve sexual gratification and this become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The taboo nature of the act becomes eroticized because it is forbidden.

Origins

As to the actual origin of the sex doll, the history is a little obscure. The scantily recorded accounts confirm the reticence of those involved in creating and using early sex dolls when it came to discussing the inner workings of the trade. They have a secret history, buried in the back issues of certain obscure periodicals. Polite society was reluctant to acknowledge that such objects existed, and production and distribution was illegal or heavily suppressed by authorities throughout much of the world until the latter part of the twentieth century. The history of the sex doll is entwined with the history of other human replicas, like the doll and the robot. The appearance of early automatons at the birth of the age of science caused great controversy in a world still largely attuned to the teachings of the church. Replications of human beings were widely perceived as a threat to the originality of the soul and the divinity of creation. It is understandable that linking artificial creations and the sex act was strictly taboo.

It is certain the first sex dolls would have been produced only when suitable materials became available. A significant development in this regard was the discovery of rubber in 1745 by French scientist Charles

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Marie de la Condamine, who was on an expedition to South America undertaken at the behest of King Louis XV. “La Condamine reported that the liquid substance could be moulded into any shape, that once hardened it was resistant to water, and that its most remarkable property was its great elasticity.”⁶ In 1839, Charles Goodyear (of tire fame) discovered the method of vulcanizing raw rubber by heating it with sulphur to make it resilient. This soon led to the process of inflating, and inflatable objects, such as tires and footballs. Further technological improvements, such as the invention of latex rubber cushioning in 1928, and the development of other durable materials like vinyl, led to their widespread application to consumer products, such as latex condoms. As with most technological developments, it was not long before they were applied to more prurient use.

Even though the sex doll as a marketable product did not appear until the second half of the twentieth century, there is much circumstantial evidence to suggest that the idea long maintained a presence in the masculine consciousness. In ancient literature and mythology, men wrote of the creation of artificial beings which would fulfill the role of sexual slaves. There are several reasons why these objects were not mass produced until the second half of the twentieth century. This era saw an advertising media working in unison with rapid developments in communications technology. This in turn led to the creation of widespread markets and the possibility for entrepreneurs to make large amounts of money.

Another factor in the “outing” of sex dolls was the gradual generational change in attitudes toward sex and sexual expression. By the 1950s, the power of the church was waning as an influence on everyday life. The impact of religion on morality was slowly superseded by the notion of individual choice. More people found themselves with disposable income. Consumer choices abounded and advertising worked to create demand. The acceptance of sex outside marriage grew, and sex became a more influential and far less subtle tool utilized to sell products to a growing market of consumers.

Not that abundant supply is a feature only of the modern world — throughout history, men did not usually lack access to sexual outlets. Prior to the modern era, divisions in class and wealth were clear. Poverty-stricken women and children of the lower classes were commonly available for “consumption” by the bourgeoisie.⁷ Moreover, it was socially acceptable in the

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pre-modern world for men to compartmentalize their sexual desires outside of the family unit, and give vent to their lustful feelings in violent and aggressive ways. Life was cheap, prostitution was more widespread and less controlled than it is today, and a majority of the destitute could be bought for a few pennies. Perhaps there was no demand for sex dolls in that world. It was only when legal boundaries were drawn, when education and communication began to expand, when women got the vote, that men needed other outlets for desires that were no longer acceptable.

At the same time, with order and civilization came greater prosperity for many. Technology inevitably came to be applied to the area of sexuality, and entrepreneurs began to look at ways of offering harmless, if not morally agreeable, outlets for excess sexual energy. The idea of the sex toy began to evolve. The technological advances of the second half of the twentieth century brought about the swift growth in the sheer range of devices, just as advances in communication allowed sex aids to be widely advertised and delivered to an ever-expanding market.

There were probably two main catalysts for the relatively successful marketing of the inflatable sex doll in the late twentieth century. The first was the concept of mail-order advertising, which allowed men to peruse periodicals and catalogs and secretly purchase objects for prurient use. The second was the creation of the sex shop. The world's first sex shop was opened by the Beate Uhse-Rotermund Company in Flensburg, Germany, in 1962.⁸ Thereafter such shops quickly spread across the globe. Once they gained acceptance and a foothold in the marketplace, they provided a reliable outlet for the sale of sex aids like dolls, and thus further production was assured.

The history of these masturbatory objects is somewhat obscure. We know that the female equivalent of the sex doll, the dildo, has existed since ancient times. It originated as a ceremonial artifact, and its current use as a sex aid was established around the turn of the century, although for many years, its true purpose was hidden under its guise as a medicinal aid for hysterical women.⁹ We know from the history of sexual mythology that man has always exploited orifices for sexual use. We are also aware that ancient civilizations produced their share of individuals who exhibited a sexual attraction to statues (Pygmalionism) and corpses (necrophilia).¹⁰ In these perversions we first detect a desire for the non-responding sexual partner.

Dames de Voyage

The modern sex doll has its most direct antecedent in the cloth fornicatory dolls used by sailors on long voyages. The *dame de voyage* or *dama de viaje* was originated by French and Spanish sailors at the height of their respective naval empires in the seventeenth century. This was the beginning of the modern sex doll. These elementary sex dolls were made from cloth or old clothes and would have been quite rudimentary. Imagination would have been critical to their use, particularly for a man isolated at sea on a long voyage. Women were generally considered bad luck on ships, and every voyage was lengthy. It was very convenient to store something as light and malleable as a life-sized cloth doll in the cramped quarters of a ship. It is likely that a single doll might have been shared among several men, although it is uncertain whether the doll(s) would have been made available to the common sailors or restricted to the higher-ranking ship's officials. Whatever the case, the dolls could not have been particularly sanitary after multiple uses, as writer Amy Wolf notes in her article "Dames de Voyage," published in the magazine *Avantoure: Anthology of Temptation*: "Made of cotton and presumably held together by dried cum, the *dame de voyage* was a hotbed of venereal diseases, and it's perhaps fortunate that no specimens — or even images — of such dolls exist today."¹¹

Like the inflatable doll, the *dame de voyage* would have required of its user a suspension of disbelief. Yet this is plausible given the level of sexual frustration which would have built up during the lengthy sea voyages of the pre-Victorian world. When the only alternatives were masturbation or buggery, perhaps the *dame de voyage* presented a viable option to the sexually deprived. In this regard we comprehend why men dreamed up stories of sirens and mermaids to fuel their fantasies on long lonely nights in their bunks, and we can appreciate the growth of prostitution in the major port cities of the world. Supply always rises to meet demand.

Unfortunately, there are no surviving examples of this elementary type of doll, but stories about them survive. There is a story that the French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596–1650) carried with him on a mid-seventeenth century sea journey to Sweden a somewhat lifelike doll made of leather and metal which he referred to as his daughter. He even named her "Francine." It is said that the doll in question was discovered by the crew when they searched Descartes' cabin for the mysteriously absent

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daughter. So horrified were they by its uncanny lifelike appearance, and perhaps mindful of the superstition that women were bad luck on ships, the sailors dragged the simulacrum on deck and cast it overboard into the ocean. While there is some uncertainty as to the veracity of the tale, it is known that Descartes did experiment with building automata earlier in his career, and that he did once have a daughter called Francine, who died of scarlet fever at the age of five. It is believed that Descartes fashioned his doll to explore the contemporary fascination with artificial life and the question of what it actually is to be human. It is probable that such philosophical notions were of little concern to the God-fearing sailors who threw her overboard.¹²

Some of the earliest literary references to sex dolls are made in French texts. There is evidence of their presence for sale in underground catalogs in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. One of the first literal references occurs in Iwan Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, published in 1908. Bloch's allusion precedes a discussion on Pygmalionism, and refers to an even older text:

In this connection we may refer to fornicatory acts effected with artificial imitations of the human body, or of individual parts of that body. There exist true Vaucansons in this province of pornographic technology, clever mechanics who, from rubber and other plastic materials, prepare entire male or female bodies, which, as *hommes* or *dames de voyage*, subvert fornicatory purposes. More especially are the genital organs represented in a manner true to nature. Even the secretion of Bartholin's glans¹³ is imitated, by means of a "pneumatic tube" filled with oil. Similarly, by means of a fluid and suitable apparatus, the ejaculation of semen is imitated. Such artificial human beings are actually offered for sale in the catalog of certain manufacturers of "Parisian Rubber Articles."¹⁴

Bloch then indicates that a fuller account of these fornicatory dolls is given by Rene Schwaeble in a book titled *Les Detraquees de Paris* (Paris 1904). The title literally translates as *The Misfits of Paris*. Schwaeble's account of what would have been the earliest recorded appearance of a manufactured sex doll appears in Chapter 26 under the heading "Homunculus."¹⁵ It takes the form of a meeting between the author and a certain "Dr. P...", who allegedly showed him the sex dolls he had created. The dolls were very lifelike, inflatable, could be "heated a little" to replicate body temperature, took three months each to create, and were available on the Rue Chaptal to the discerning customer for "about 3,000 francs."

ICy commence la fiction
De lymage pymalion



Py malion fut entaillierres
Pourtraiant en fer & en pier
res
en metaulx/en os/& en cyres

Pygmalionism is the psychological term for a sexual attraction toward statues and other inanimate objects, usually of one's own creation, seen here in the medieval French text *Roman de la Rose*, c. 1505.

Explained the doctor, "With my dolls there is never any blackmail, or jealousy, argument or illness.... They are always ready, always compliant." He added that for a lesser price (1,000 francs) he could produce just the lower half of a doll, and that for 10,000–12,000 francs, he would create a doll in the likeness of an actual person, living or dead.

Schwaeble's account indicates that the dolls in question were exceptionally detailed. Dr. P. indicated that the three months of work involved

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would include a carefully articulated inner framework, head and body hair, teeth and nails, skin coloring, vein patterns, eyes and tongue. He also articulated the reasons for his secrecy and anonymity: “Unfortunately I can’t advertise openly. The police keep interfering in my business, and I have to keep some weird rubber animals around the place, so that I can say I’m a maker of inflatable figures for funfairs.”¹⁶ This comment illuminates the scant literary documentation of the early history of sex dolls. For much of Western history, the attempt to replicate human figures, especially for sexual purposes, would have been considered blasphemy and undoubtedly have been punishable by law.

I should also explain Iwan Bloch’s reference to Vaucanson in the previous quotation. Jacques de Vaucanson (1709–1782) was an eighteenth-century mechanical inventor whose creations were representations of living creatures automated by clockwork, and could be wound up to perform certain rudimentary tasks. His most famous automatons were a mechanical flute player and a duck that appeared to digest and excrete its food. “His magnificent creations were admired by audiences all over Europe; they were praised by kings and applauded by scientists. During the hundred years they were in circulation, they were exhibited in fashionable showrooms, at carnivalesque fairgrounds, and in private cabinets of curiosities.”¹⁷ For much of his later life, Vaucanson set out on the Promethean task of creating an artificial man. The project enjoyed the patronage of no less than the king of France, Louis XV. However, after many years of experimenting with materials like blood and rubber, the project was mysteriously abandoned. The creator was said to be “disgusted” with the whole idea, the royal family appeared to lose interest and the matter simply disappeared from public view.¹⁸

Another book which references these anonymous French catalogs is *Erotic Contrivances: Appliances Attached to, or Used in Place of, the Sexual Organs*, privately published by Henry Cary in 1922.¹⁹ Cary references two French catalogs in particular, which refer to the sale of inflatable artificial vaginas and artificial men and women respectively:

The body in action moves like a living being, pressing, embracing, changing position at will by a simple pressure. The mechanism which gives life to the apparatus is very substantial and cannot get out of order. The complete apparatus, guaranteed against breakage, man or woman, 3000 francs.... This apparatus can be fitted with a phonographic attachment, recording and speaking at will — man, 3250 francs; woman, 3500 francs.²⁰

Cary goes on to infer that the French do not have a monopoly on the production of these early sex dolls, but rather the items, along with a range of other pornographic and obscene articles and photographs, are sold throughout Europe but largely originate most cheaply in Germany and most expensively in Austria.

Oskar Kokoschka

Evidence that a knowledge of and an interest in these artificial representations of women was growing is further supported by their appeal to artists and intellectuals. Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980) was one of the greatest Expressionist artists of the twentieth century. Born in Pochlam, Austria, in 1886, one of his exhibitions in Vienna in 1911 was famously attended by the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The soon-to-be infamously assassinated ruler remarked disdainfully of the artist's work, "This fellow's bones ought to be broken in his body." Kokoschka had a torrid love affair with Alma Mahler, the widow of the great composer. She was considerably older than him, and when she ended the relationship after three years, Kokoschka reacted badly and continued to obsess over her for the rest of his life.²¹ Indeed, so powerful were his residual feelings for Alma that he tried to exorcise his obsession by commissioning the construction of a life-sized doll, exact in every detail, which he then treated like a living companion. This occurred while he was living in Dresden in 1920. He even commissioned Mahler's personal dressmaker, Hermine Moos, to make the doll for him.²² He bought the doll clothes and underwear, and brought it on public engagements. Indeed he was quite brazen in his public display of the doll, as Jon Stratton notes in *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*. "He got his servant to spread rumours about the doll, to give the public impression that she was a real woman: 'for example, that I had hired a horse and carriage to take her out on sunny days, and rented a box for her at the Opera in order to show her off.' Finally, Kokoschka held a big party during which, the servant 'paraded the doll as if at a fashion show.'"²³

For Kokoschka, the doll was not only a surrogate for Mahler, but she was, to his mind, a considerable improvement on the original. Unlike the real Alma, with whom he had constantly argued, including over her deci-

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sion to have an abortion against his wishes, the doll was eternally silent and compliant.²⁴ As to whether he had sexual relations with the doll, Kokoschka never told. He merely recounts that the doll was decapitated and destroyed in a drunken frenzy by friends at a party. Undoubtedly the creation of the doll was Kokoschka's response to his perceived emasculation at the hands of the real Alma Mahler.

Hans Bellmer and the Surrealists

In many ways, the German Surrealist Hans Bellmer (1902–1975) is the father figure of the modern sex doll. The uncanny, eroticized models created by Bellmer in the 1930s differed from the functional sex doll only in that they lacked the necessary orifices for penetration. Bellmer devoted his life to the art of rebellion, against his father, against authority, and particularly against the growing power of the Nazi state in the 1930s. But the catalyst for his lust-inspired creations was an unrequited infatuation he developed for a fifteen-year-old cousin named Ursula. This desire began in response to the growing frailty of his wife Margarete following a bout of tuberculosis, and her subsequent inability to bear children. There is also evidence to suggest that Bellmer was aware of Kokoschka's doll and drew inspiration from it for his own creations.²⁵

Basing his family in Berlin, funded by his mother and aided by his brother Fritz and a contemporary doll maker and costume designer named Lotte Pinzel, Bellmer created his first doll in 1933. The rudimentary piece was constructed from a broom handle, metal rods, nuts and bolts, carved wood and flax, positioned over a wooden frame. The final product was plastered over, shaped and painted. The model was hollow and within the torso, in place of a womb, Bellmer created what he described as “a panorama of images of bad taste representing the thoughts and dreams of a young girl.” These were ingeniously accessed by a portal in the navel, activated by pressing the left nipple. The artist documented the doll's construction with a series of photographs, self-published in 1934 in a catalog entitled “Die Puppe” (“The Puppet”).

Undoubtedly, exposing the doll's inner workings as metaphor for a pubescent girl's innermost thoughts was a kind of symbolic defilement of his cousin for her anticipated rejection of his imaginary advances. Bellmer

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knew physical love with his young relative was unachievable. This was his way of capturing and controlling her. To further express his unspoken desires, Bellmer took the doll apart and rearranged its parts in a series of suggestive poses representing his fantasies, which he also photographed for posterity. Admittedly the doll and the posed images had great artistic merit. Yet there was also no denying the uncomfortable impression the piece had on its audience, given the taboo connotations surrounding its real-life model. Oddly enough, Bellmer's niece Ursula, the subject of the work, took some of the photographs with her to Paris in 1934, and showed them to Breton and Eluard, the vanguard of the Surrealist movement. So impressed were they that Bellmer came to meet them in February 1935 and organized the translation of "Die Puppe" into French.

By this time the artist was already working on a new and improved doll. Apparently dissatisfied with the immobility of the first piece, he acquired a wooden art mannequin with movable ball joints as the basis of the new model. The second doll was much more eroticized than its predecessor. Featuring reversible hips/torso, a hairless vulva, buttocks and spheres that operated alternatively as thighs or huge breasts, the doll was finished with little white socks and girlish shoes, its head topped with a bow. Once more Bellmer posed the doll in a range of provocative positions in various lurid settings and took numerous photographs of it that seemed to simultaneously evoke notions of violence and violation. The Surrealists claimed that Bellmer's images of the doll were intended to represent a metaphorical attack on the rigid patriarchal regimentation of the Nazi state. The images also illustrate the castration complex, fetishism and the uncanny. A more recent critique suggested that "by breaking his Doll and rearranging its parts in fetishistic, erotically charged ways, Bellmer is at one assuaging his own castration fears and asserting his phallic, creative force."²⁶ Bellmer went on to create a third doll in 1937. This time the piece was a sculpture of female body parts and metal rods which resembled a praying mantis, a metaphor for the sexually predatory woman. He titled this third doll "*The Machinegunnere ... State of Grace.*" He also began a new collection of drawings representing his own bizarre erotic fantasies, titled *L'anatomie de l'image*, which would not be published until 1957.

Bellmer's obsession with dolls clearly illustrates the symbiotic combination of the desire for and the fear of an unattainable and thereby threatening object. By his mutilation and severe restraint of the dolls he

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created, Bellmer symbolizes the masculine urge to regulate female sexuality itself. Like Kokoschka before him, Bellmer sought to create an idealized vision of a woman with overt sexuality that was nevertheless subjugated to an extreme level of control. The relevance of Bellmer's work to the modern sex doll lies in the erotic feelings his lurid images evoked in his audience. In this regard there is at the very least a subliminal link between Bellmer's art and the sex doll as marketable product.

SHE AIN'T HEAVY, SHE'S JUST RUBBER

The Genesis of the Sex Doll

We know from literature and mythology that man has always sought a ready outlet to relieve his sexual urges. The need for a suitable, pliant replacement for a human partner led to the use of many ready substitutes, from fruits to livestock and, eventually, to the construction of human simulacra. Thus far we have examined the steady progression in the technology surrounding fornicatory dolls leading up to the mid-point of the twentieth century. The two world wars which dominated the political landscape of the first half of the century brought an understandably intense focus to the development of industrial technologies. At the same time, war also brings widespread deprivation, which in its wake foments innovation and inspiration, particularly in terms of the need for sexual fulfillment.

The Borghild Project

There is an unsubstantiated theory that the first modern sex dolls were developed by the great industrial powers of Germany and Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As the two Axis nations geared up and entered into global land- and sea-based warfare, they encountered the problem of the sexual frustration of men cooped up together for long periods of time with little contact with women. This was especially the case on long sea voyages. Perhaps they recalled the *dame de voyage* when considering how to provide sexual relief for men under the duress of isolation and combat.

With this in mind, the Germans supposedly created a special task force to address the matter, and called it the “Model Borghild” project.¹ Legend has it that the Nazis under Heinrich Himmler started the project in the early years of the war to combat the sexual excesses of the conquering

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German armies. Himmler was allegedly concerned about the debilitating effect of sexually transmitted diseases picked up by his troops from foreign prostitutes of inferior races. His solution was to commission a select team of experts to create a traveling army of gynoids to follow the conquering Wehrmacht across the battlefields of Europe. The dolls were to be housed in a series of "disinfections-chambers."²

The idea of German stormtroopers marching across the globe followed by trucks filled with sex dolls seems risible, and one can imagine the dolls becoming a laughing stock among enemy soldiers. However, we should keep in mind that Hitler's Nazis were not averse to flights of fancy. They also gave serious consideration to esoteric subjects like eugenics, astrology and the occult, among others. So perhaps the idea of preserving the health of the master race in such a manner is not beyond the realm of possibility. The project was centered in the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden. It was supervised by the contemporarily famous technician and expert in synthetic materials Franz Tschakert, and overseen initially by Dr. Joachim Mrurgowsky of the SS, and later by another SS doctor, a Dane named Olen Hannussen. The team also included a resident psychiatrist, Dr. Rudolph Chargeheimer, and an art student and sculptor named Arthur Rink.

The lifespan of the project was from June 1940 to January 1942. Chargeheimer advised his colleagues that in order to keep the troops away from potentially disease-riddled whores, the dolls would have to have realistic flesh, malleable limbs, and an enticingly realistic sex organ. It was also important that the doll reflect the Nordic/Aryan beauty ideal, with pale skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. However, some differences arose. While Tschakert hoped to model the doll on an actual plaster cast from a living prototype chosen from a select handful of famous German athletes, Mrurgowsky favored using a more coquettish face, perhaps based on a popular German actress. Following his departure, Hannussen rejected using a living model's face, and suggested that "an artificial face of lust" would hold greater appeal to the ordinary soldier in the field. "The doll has only one purpose and she should never become a substitute for the honourable mother at home.... When the soldier makes love to Borghild, it has nothing to do with love. Therefore the face of our anthropomorphic sexmachine should be exactly how Weininger described the common wanton's face."³ This acknowledgement of the mother/whore dichotomy as it pertains to common patriarchal thought is understandable at face value. One of the

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reasons men visit prostitutes is to divert their baser desires away from their loved ones. Hence they are drawn to the stereotypical slattern of male fancy, the dissolute, fallen woman. It makes sense that men would prefer a sex doll to reflect this stereotype.

With this in mind, ten wanton faces were initially modeled on the prototype body and used in psychological tests. The faces were shown to a select group of soldiers and their responses were gauged. Following this experiment, Chargeheimer and Hannussen were convinced that the success of the doll would chiefly depend upon her facial expression. The latter had correctly anticipated that a vulgar countenance would probably appeal to the ordinary man. Model heads were produced in a showroom-factory in Königsberg, and psychological tests were carried out at a barracks in Soldatenheim St. Helier. The first complete doll was produced in September 1941 and paraded before Himmler in Berlin. It is said that Himmler was so impressed he ordered fifty dolls on the spot.

However, a week after placing the first order, Himmler cancelled and instead cut the budget for the project, presumably because the Nazis were forced to put more financial emphasis on their deepening commitment to global conquest. Subsequently the whole project was put on hold. It is assumed that the mold for the Borghild doll and all supporting documentation were returned to the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden, where they were probably destroyed in the Allied bombings in February 1945.

It is here that the veracity of the Borghild Project is called into question. All that remains of the entire adventure are two photographs, allegedly rescued from a rubbish bin in the museum's laboratory by Arthur Rink before its destruction. These photographs have subsequently been discredited by numerous researchers as fakes, as has the existence of a journalist named Norbert Lenz. It is suspicious that all the evidence, aside from a couple of highly dubious photographs, seems to have been destroyed. Moreover, nobody associated with the still functioning Deutsche Hygiene Museum seems to remember anything about the project. In this regard we must dismiss Borghild as nothing more than an elaborate hoax perpetrated by a modern trickster in an attempt to manipulate history.

As for the Japanese, there is nothing to suggest that they pursued the matter further than theory. Like the Germans, they looked at ways of alleviating sexual frustration among their naval crews, particularly those on submarines. It is common knowledge that the Japanese forced captive female

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prisoners to provide sexual services to their troops during the war. As awful as the experience must have been, for the military, it was a much more practical solution than trying to supply a constantly mobile armed force with sex dolls. The Japanese have a long history of interest in sex dolls and sometimes refer to these objects as *datch waifu* (Dutch wives).⁴ The term originates in the seventeenth century, when merchant ships would carry leather dolls around for the comfort of the crew. The Japanese became familiar with them in their trade dealings with the Dutch East India Company.⁵ We will examine later the huge impact of the Japanese on post-war sex doll technology.

The immediate post-World War II era saw huge migrations. Multitudes fled from the decimated cities of old Europe to the New World, particularly to America, which would rapidly become the dominant, capitalist, global political force. Due to the general need to rebuild cities and infrastructure, the 1950s saw full employment and prosperity gradually return to most of the industrial world. As a corollary to all this growth, new consumer products were marketed to a wider audience through ever-improving methods of communication. In a world experiencing great social upheaval and greater fiscal power and individual choice, one of the few constants was sexuality and the sex drive. The age-old impulse to create a perfect replica of the female form persisted, and was gradually married to discoveries in science and technology. Entrepreneurs recognized the potential of marketing a sex doll to frustrated men on a wide scale, as technology inexorably advanced.

Bild Lilli

The first sex doll marketed as such was an 11.5-inch plastic figurine known as Bild Lilli. The doll was so named because she was modeled on a cartoon character featured in the German newspaper *Bild Zeitung*. Lilli was the creation of an artist named Reinhard Beuthin. While some historians refer to the character as a prostitute, it is perhaps more accurate to describe Lilli as a good-time girl who had experienced privation during the war, and had no intention of suffering again. Hence, she was prepared to use her feminine charms in any way to access wealth and comfort. Usually, this meant exploiting sex-crazed businessmen. With her platinum blonde hair twirled in a ponytail, sensuous arched eyebrows, wanton gaze, cruelly

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pursed lips and curvaceous body, Lilli was the embodiment of the Teutonic sexual ideal. She was certainly no child's toy, and legend has it that she was initially offered for sale to gentlemen who frequented the bars and tobacco shops of Hamburg's Reeperbahn, a notorious German red light district.

The cartoon version of Lilli first appeared in June 1952, and a plastic doll was created in her image by Max Weissbrodt of the Hausser/Elastolin Company in August 1955. The doll was advertised in pamphlets distributed around the area. She was generally marketed as a kind of joke figurine for men who perhaps could not afford the real thing. Interestingly, many doll experts claim that Lilli was the original inspiration for Ruth Handler's Barbie doll. It is said that Handler procured a few Lilli dolls on her travels through Germany and Switzerland in the late 1950s, and, unaware of its sordid origins, encouraged her designers at Mattel to purchase the rights to re-make them in the United States. The rest, as they say, is history. Certainly, if you examine the original Lilli and Barbie dolls side by side, the similarities are quite striking.

While the Lilli doll was not a penetration toy, she was created as a type of pornographic caricature. The doll was advertised in certain provocative poses, and also came with a number of outfits which left little to the imagination. She was aimed at men with sex on the mind, as historian M.G. Lord attests in her book, *Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*:

A professional floozie of the first order, *Bild Zeitung's* Lilli traded sex for money, delivered sassy comebacks to police officers, and sought the company of "balding, jowly fatcats." ... While the cartoon Lilli was a user of men, the doll was herself a plaything — a masculine joke, perhaps, for men who could not afford to play with a real Lilli. A German brochure from the 1950s confided that ... the doll was "always discreet," while her complete wardrobe made her "the star of every bar."⁶

Barbie

The first Barbie doll was produced by the Mattel Company in 1959. Introduced at the 1959 New York annual toy fair, she immediately took the children's market by storm, soon becoming the most popular doll in history. Barbie is essentially an anatomically disproportionate fashion plate, designed to drum into little girls the importance of obsessing about their

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looks, and thus buying into the myth of female body “perfection” perpetuated by the fashion industry. It has been proven that Barbie’s waist is impossibly thin and her breasts ridiculously large (39 inches) in proportion if she were a full-sized woman. This differs markedly from most other dolls aimed at children, which tend to be asymmetrical in shape.

Barbie is significant in that she was the first child’s doll to be produced with breasts and an hourglass figure. Before this, dolls were molded in a more asexual state. Barbie also differed in her facial features, which included arched eyebrows, cat like eyes, and dark eyeliner. She sported red lips and fingernails and hoop earrings, and a set of high heels. The subliminal sexual connotations are obvious, a throwback, perhaps, to her origins as Bild Lilli. This slightly risqué design was in fact toned down over the years as Barbie’s popularity increased. The contemporary artist Albert Crib created a photographic montage of the evolution of Barbie from 1959 to the early 21st century. Calling the show “From Bild Lilli to Barbie,” Crib set out to demonstrate how sexualized and coquettish the original Barbie was.⁷

It does not take a giant leap of the imagination to see the connection between Lilli, Barbie and the anatomically precise sex dolls which would soon be marketed toward the adult consumer. By the middle of the twentieth century, vast improvements in communication (and thereby advertising) and trade, and in industrial production itself enabled all manner of goods to be mass-produced and marketed to a growing audience. As the mindset shaped by the deprivations of the war years gradually receded, there arose a more confident and aspiring society hungry for new ideas and new products. In turn, as the global economy grew stronger the importance of the church waned. The significance of sex to human contentment gradually nudged its way into the social conscience. Inevitably, some of the products of the new consumer society were of a prurient nature. Those who would follow in the footsteps of Dr. P., Kokoschka, Bellmer, Beuthin and Weissbrodt utilized now widely available man-made materials to create the first mass-produced and marketed sex dolls.

The Blow-Up Doll

In the popular mind, a sex doll is an inflatable doll. Indeed the blow-up sex doll is the most durable kind. Its popularity as a sex aid and novelty

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item stretches from the 1970s until the present day. While there is little historical material available on the post-war development of the inflatable doll, it is acknowledged that the work of the early manufacturers in Europe, particularly in France and Germany, was continued, using new technologies as they emerged to bring greater realism. In 1987, the Treaty of Rome was invoked in the European Court of Justice to allow a West German company named Conegate Ltd. to import inflatable sex dolls into Britain for the first time. Prior to this, such items were banned in the United Kingdom because of restrictions on the importation of obscene or indecent articles.⁸ The court ruling overturned a statute which had been in place for more than a century, and significantly ushered in not only the mass dissemination of sex-related products, but also a change of cultural mindset.

There is also scant evidence of the development of inflatable sex dolls in the United States. However, it is logical to assume that their appearance corresponds with the mass migration of Europeans to the U.S. throughout the twentieth century. Their appearance on the American market coincided



In the case of inexpensive inflatable female sex dolls, the genitals are very rudimentary.

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with inflatable children's toys and mannequins used for medical and psychological purposes, such as those demonstrating the reproductive process. In the 1960s and 1970s, they began to appear in their true guise in the small print advertisements of pornographic magazines, and in certain shops in the red light areas of major American cities. There is some evidence of the marketing of dolls in the U.S. in the print media:

There are a number of men's magazines on the market so offensive that legitimate businesses will not advertise in them. And yet the magazines thrive; ... There are advertisements for life-size latex blow up dolls, "so realistic you'll believe she's a real woman." ... He showed me crate after crate filled with envelopes, all of them from men ordering the dolls.⁹

The fact that blow-up dolls were also being sold in adult bookstores and sex shops in the seventies is evidenced by a report in the *New York Times* in December 1976, "Boston Combat Zone Becomes Target of Police Crackdown; Adult Entertainment Area Center of Dispute After Outbreak of Violence."¹⁰ Articles such as this one suggest that sex dolls were considered part of the pornographic industry by those who wanted to crack down on the distribution of pornography in the United States.

Despite the enormous leap in technology which occurred in sex doll production in the late twentieth century, the inflatable doll is both the archetype and the stereotype. By general consensus there are three basic types of sex doll, and these can be separated into specific models developed in different eras, using the best technology available. These types are vinyl, latex and silicone.

The traditional vinyl doll is an air-inflatable model sporting an artificial vagina or penis. This type is rather unrealistic, as the face and hair are usually painted on. The model is put together by the process of welding, and the item can only hold so much weight before it begins to split apart at the seams. It has been recently determined that this type of doll can pose a health risk as it may contain large amounts of vinyl chloride or phthalates, which make the plastic skin more flexible, but are toxic and carcinogenic in large doses. However, these low-priced models are still widely available in sex shops or online, at around \$50.

The middle range models are made of latex, a slightly heavier material with no welded seams. This type features a mannequin head, more realistic hair in the form of a wig, plastic or glass eyes, and properly molded hands and feet. Healthwise, the manufacturing process leaves most latex dolls

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coated with a layer of zinc oxide, which should be removed by showering the object prior to use. Quality latex dolls are predominantly manufactured in France and Hungary. Widely available in sex shops or online, these models usually cost between \$150–250.

The top of the line sex doll is made from silicone. These dolls are very lifelike, featuring real hair in a variety of styles, with an articulated PVC (a hard plastic made from polyvinyl chloride) or metal skeleton, and are much heavier and thus closer to the weight of an actual woman. They have flexible joints to allow for a greater variety of positioning and usually offer the bonus of removable sexually functioning parts (mouth, vagina, anus) to allow for easier cleaning. These are very expensive, ranging from \$8,000 and upwards. Generally available via the Internet and currently only manufactured in the United States and Japan, these incredibly lifelike and uncanny dolls are discussed in full detail later.

There are also partial sex dolls, which consist of an eroticized part of the anatomical structure. These types include modeled heads with func-



An excellent example of the eroticization of the female body is this torso sex toy marketed by Pipedream (courtesy Pipedream Productions, Inc.).

tional mouths, or in some instances just the upper torso and head of a female body, with all the necessary apertures. The value of this type of doll is that it is light, more readily transportable and easy to store. Most popular in the partial body models are those simply consisting of the genitalia, anatomically correct, fully functional, life-size replicas of the vagina and anus. These types of dolls use more advanced technology, such as silicone flesh that retains its shape memory, and variable body temperature. Items like the breasts and vagina become softer and more malleable, embracing the capacity to stretch and create a more realistic look and feel.

The Manufactured Pose of Inflatable Sex Dolls

The inflatable sex doll is usually packaged in a brightly colored box and advertised in magazines or online in a highly misleading manner. If we look at the type of language used to market the inflatable doll, it becomes clear that the object represents an idealized woman in a state of constant sexual arousal. She is at once wanton, available, open and beckoning. As a representation of the ultimate sexual object, she serves no other purpose than the sexual. The glossy advertisements for sex dolls tend to show a real model or a drawing of a woman, while simultaneously eliding the presentation of an exact image of the object itself. This is done because the basic inflatable doll is arguably more comical than sexually arousing in appearance. While the users of these items obviously accept the anatomical inaccuracy, it would not make good marketing sense to show how unrealistic the doll really is.

A further unrealistic element is the malleability of the inflatable doll. The advertised image tends to show the doll in certain receptive positions. Quite often the image shows the figure on its hands and knees, looking back over its shoulder, or simply on its knees in a submissive position. But the physical structure of the doll makes it impossible to pose it in such a manner. The only way it is really practical to copulate with an inflatable doll is the missionary position, whether lying horizontally or standing vertically, or with the doll on top. Lying on top presents further problems, given that the inflatable can only support a certain amount of weight or repeat usage before the seams in the material deteriorate. While it is possible to purchase dolls cast in a certain attitude, such as on all fours for

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rear entry penetration, these are often unable to be moved into any other posture, so variety is not an option. The manufactured posture of the love doll reflects the male patriarchal concept of an ideal sexual receptacle, with permanently open arms and legs, beckoning and welcoming her lover, and with a completely silent yet sexually functional mouth.

Thus we come to the facial structure of the inflatable. It is usually quite inflexible, and in some ways comical. The face is frozen in time like Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*, except that the look of wide-eyed amazement is supposed to convey female ecstasy, rather than terror. The permanently open mouth constructed to permit oral sex. It is just unfortunate that it sometimes seems as if the lips are parted in an eternal scream. Manufacturers have traditionally done the best they possibly could with the materials available, adding accoutrements like realistic hair, make-up and the best skin texture technology the budget would allow.

The original inflatable sex doll required of its user a suspension of disbelief, the same disbelief practiced by the earlier users of the *dame de voyage*. While the inflatable doll was a huge advancement on the cloth effigy, it still lacked verisimilitude. No matter how brightly packaged and marketed, it always looked somewhat ridiculous and unrealistic, particularly in the face, once out of the box. Indeed much of the bodywork was also anatomically flawed because of low-cost manufacture, or a simple lack of technology. Most of the attention and craftsmanship was focused on the penetration areas, the mouth, vagina and the anus. This is understandable, since these were of prime importance to the users and were the areas which would receive the most wear during the lifetime of the product.

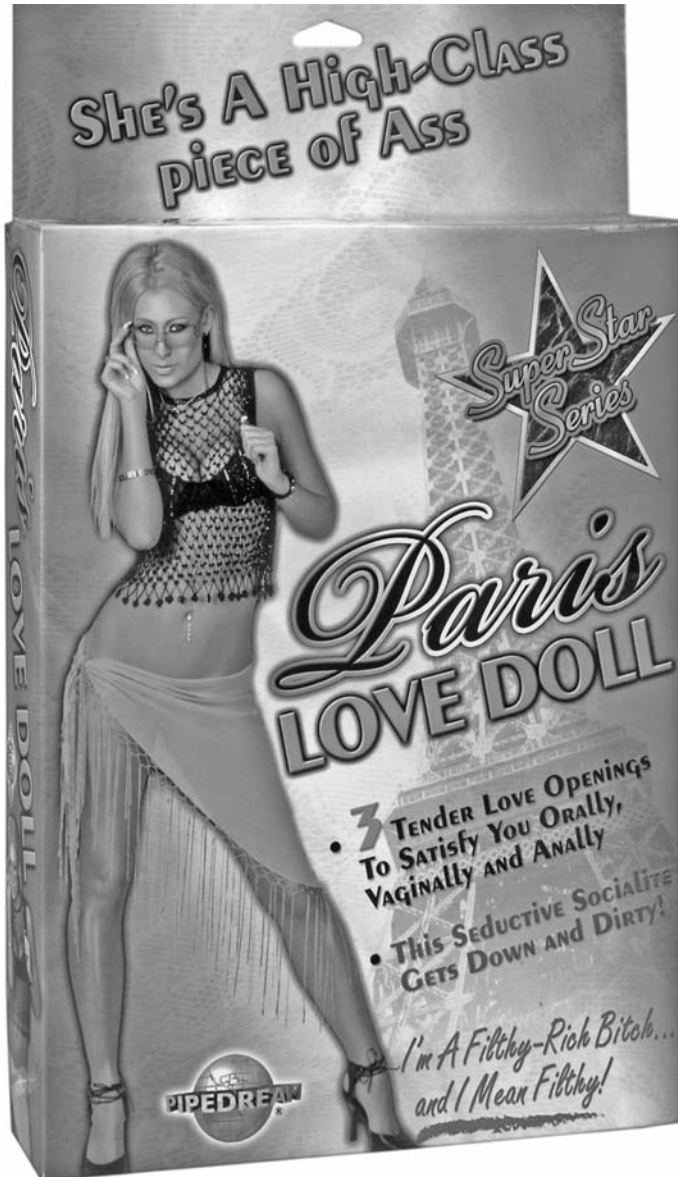
Nevertheless the sheer volume of inflatable dolls available on the market attests to their continued popularity. They range from the novelty inflatable, anything from corpulent to transparent to animal or alien, right up to the top of the line models with moving parts. The latter are usually fairly realistic and often modeled on contemporary pornographic film stars and even on mainstream public figures.¹¹ In between are a vast array of options, from male dolls with erect penises to she-males, pregnant fornicatory dolls and others catering to all manner of sexual peccadillo. There are various anime and manga style dolls. The lower priced models are made from rubber, plastic or vinyl, the middle range of latex, and the upper range of the latest synthetic skin material. This material is purported to feel exactly like real human flesh, and goes by a range of copyrighted



Anime Annie shows the creative range of the twenty-first century inflatable doll; it's a tribute to anime and Manga, available from Pipedream (courtesy of Pipedream Products, Inc.).

brand names — CyberSkin, UltraSkin, and EroSkin, to name a few. Some of the common features touted as selling points for inflatable dolls mirror the pornographic stereotype of what is desirable in a woman. Additional options include vibrating and pulsing vaginas, noduled mouths, sucking mouths, movable arms, soft hands, realistic hair, painted nails, body scent,

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The Paris love doll is a novelty inflatable loosely based on a real life celebrity, marketed by Pipedream (courtesy of Pipedream Products, Inc.).

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The “JHo” is also loosely based on a celebrity (courtesy of Pipedream Products, Inc.).

blinking eyes, rotating tongue, soft lips, realistic erect nipples, vibrating love grip hands, realistic feet, squirting breasts, squirting vaginas, and pierced vaginas. All of these features indicate the lengths to which manufacturers go to lend a semblance of reality to their product.

Popularity of Sex Dolls

As time progressed, ever more subtle technological improvements were made to sex dolls to enhance their appeal. But who were the users? Although sex dolls were an occasional topic in male fraternities across much of the globe, nobody spoke or wrote about purchasing or using a sex doll. To admit to cohabitation with a sex doll would be to suggest an inability to establish a normal relationship with a woman. Thus sex doll use remained a secret pastime, its practitioners a lonely society of isolated individuals, except for those who procured them as novelty items for unsuspecting friends. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, sex dolls were only available by mail-order from certain adult catalogs and advertisements in the back pages of soft core pornographic men's magazines whose popularity increased in the 1960s. By the 1980s, the dolls were a staple item in sex shops, which gradually spread across suburbia and eventually into the shopping malls of contemporary society, where they reside to this day.

The sex doll remained an enigmatic figure, precariously balanced on the margins of popular culture. Occasionally it would surface in mainstream society, an iconic prank figure in film and television shows, or the butt of a bawdy cartoon or joke, but never taken seriously as an object of desire except by surreptitious users. Meanwhile, the gradual sexualizing of the doll continued throughout the twentieth century. A contemporary English firm, Mascot Models, produced a series of pornographic miniatures of females in bondage attire. Several Japanese companies also make similar scale models of naked Caucasian women in dominatrix gear.

Interestingly, some businesses are still making cloth sex dolls, including a Japanese company called Dekunoboo and an American organization known as Teddy Babes/Eighth Wonder. They are made like plush toys (a genre which has its own particular sexual fetish). A search of the Internet reveals that amateurs have long been making their own personal sex dolls

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from fabric. Global communications technology has allowed these people to find each other online, form interest groups and exchange images and ideas. This is adolescent fantasy made flesh, or cloth, as it were. With just a few rudimentary tools, a sewing machine and a vivid imagination, you can create your own personal sex doll at minimal cost. This throwback to an earlier age illustrates the durability of the concept of the sex doll.

As sex itself gradually seeped into the mainstream as an acceptable subject for dinner party conversation, so the sexual products of a consumer society gradually became more commonplace. Then as the twentieth century drew to a close, several developments occurred which propelled the sex doll not only into the age of robotics, but also briefly into the popular consciousness. The first was a rapid advance in communications technology. The Internet and its evolving tools like e-mail and bulletin boards allowed like-minded individuals to share knowledge and information about their common interests. Individual sex doll users discovered they were not alone. The second development was a call for greater realism in the film industry.

Three

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The New Millennium Sex Doll

By the mid-1990s, movie-makers were able to use new technology to create ever more lifelike human replicas. Dedicated craftsmen at special effects studios ensured that supply met demand as the clamor for greater realism increased. It is a profitable pursuit. Currently a top of the line movie corpse costs about the same as a moderately priced car.¹ As new technologies evolve they are rapidly applied to the pornographic genre. Accordingly, there has been a remarkable transformation in the development of sex doll technology in recent times. A high-end market for sex dolls emerged in the United States in 1995, when studio techniques were first applied to sex dolls. Indeed, the last fifteen years have witnessed huge strides in fornicatory dolls, first because of technological advancements,

and second because the Internet increased consumer demand and preserved anonymity.

In turning their attention to this industry, CGI technicians saw an opportunity to exploit a market hungry for greater realism. More importantly, these entrepreneurs were quick to realize the power of the Internet, which would allow their products to be advertised around the globe via word of (online) mouth. This is exactly what happened. Gone were the days when sex dolls could only be seen and bought in seedy back alley shops, or ordered



The near-human look of the high-end sex doll is evident in this RealDoll.

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This image is from the montage “Epic Part 3” featuring Jayde and Ceilidh, two high-end dolls. The montage by “Incrediwagon” appeared on the Coverdoll e-zine.

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from the back pages of men's magazines. The Internet ensured that the product could be presented in all its glory to an enthusiastic audience in the privacy of its own home. Moreover, like-minded men and women were able to find each other anonymously online and communicate.

These last points are significant. The ability of a customer to view and purchase a sex doll online negates the fear of public ridicule, by removing the risk of being seen purchasing it. Contemporary web-sites such as www.dollforum.com and www.coverdoll.com allow doll lovers to swap images and stories online. One generic sex doll porn site, www.charliejoanne.com, features an ever-changing format of dolls in various outfits and scenarios. In Japan, a monthly magazine dedicated to sex doll fetishists called *I-doloid* functions somewhat like a celebrity fashion magazine, offering photo sets of the newest dolls, and tips on how to maintain a relationship with your doll.

The results of the application of new technology to the sex doll industry are quite phenomenal. The difference between the original blowup doll and her gynoid counterpart is a mighty chasm, and the industry keeps progressing along with the robotics industry. Consequently, manufacturers are continually evolving and offering a greater range of options to tempt customers, who are predominantly wealthy, lonely men. More importantly, the anonymity of the Internet has allowed the discerning consumer to discreetly direct the development of the industry. Customers ask manufacturers to customize dolls to suit their own personal tastes and help improve verisimilitude. However, the basic doll remains an artificial companion with three working sex orifices, which comes in a number of races and hair colors. The majority of dolls are female, but male and transgender models are also available. There are a large range of different female faces available, as well as a variety of body types. Wealthier customers can even request a specific look, perhaps modeled on a real person.

Matt McMullen

The originator of the new millennium sex doll was an unwitting California artist named Matt McMullen. As a young man McMullen harbored ambitions to be a successful artist or a rock star, and his first real job in the arts sector was making Halloween masks for a small company. He was

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“Fantasia” was the covergirl of the August 2009 edition of the Coverdoll e-zine at Coverdoll.com.

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also a keen sculptor, creating life-sized silicone figures. In 1994, when he was a struggling artist, McMullen created and exhibited a very realistic, poseable mannequin. He subsequently posted images of his creation on the Internet, seeking feedback from the artistic community.² To his surprise, many people responded and said they not only liked his work, but they were curious about whether he could produce a mannequin that was also sexually functional. McMullen ran with the idea and developed an obsession with anatomical correctness. He initially took ten online orders for \$5,000 each, paid in advance. His wife was the original model for the hands and feet of the dolls. Realizing the considerable money to be made from his new endeavor, McMullen created a burgeoning industry in sex dolls.

To meet the growing demand, McMullen formed his own company, calling it Abyss Creations, which manufactures RealDolls. When word began to spread around the globe over the Internet about these incredibly lifelike new sex dolls, other entrepreneurs entered the market. The manufacturing and marketing these new generation sex dolls is still a relatively new industry. Because of the enormous costs involved in materials and technology, only a handful of companies have the resources to produce the new millennium gynoids. Most of these fledgling companies are based in the United States and Japan. At the forefront of the industry are Abyss Creations and the RealDoll, SuperBabe, CybOrgasMatrix, 1st-PC, and Mimicon. In Japan, the leaders in the field are Paper Moon, 4Woods, Orient Industries and Axis Honeydolls. All of these companies have promotional websites with photos of their numerous models and references from satisfied customers. The following is a brief synopsis of the work of some of the major players in the industry.

Abyss Creations

Based in San Marcos, California, Abyss Creations produces the RealDoll (www.RealDoll.com), the prototype of the new millennium sex doll. Founded in 1996, it is still considered the top choice in gynoids, mostly due to the determination of Matt McMullen to keep abreast of the latest technologies and push the industry in new and exciting directions. Abyss offers the biggest range of dolls on the market, with nineteen female and two male dolls in its catalog. The website also features a "RealDoll configurator," which allows a customer to create his own personal doll choosing

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from a range of body part options. RealDolls cost anywhere from \$6,000 to \$10,000, depending on the accessories. The standard cost (in June 2009) of a female doll with three entries was \$6,499 plus shipping costs, which vary within and outside the United States. The male doll was slightly more expensive, with less demand and a smaller range of options. RealDolls offers ten customizable body types, sixteen faces and five skin tones, available in any combination. It is possible to request an unusual skin color (blue for example), and tan lines. Other options include custom wigs (\$500–\$1,000), eight hair colors, three pubic hair colors and styles, six eye colors, eight eye shadows, three eyelash styles, four eyeliner colors, and five finger/toe nail colors. Each doll is individually named, including one which pays homage to its Japanese counterpart, named Anna Mae (anime), a Manga style doll.

RealDolls are on display in places like the Hustler Hollywood Store and the Heidi Fleiss Store on Hollywood Boulevard. Abyss occasionally releases a doll for sale on eBay just to test the market. As the front runner in the industry, Abyss is continually introducing new accessories to excite the market. In 2003, for example, it added the “Face-X” system. This allowed any RealDoll face to be interchanged with any body type. This means that a customer could attach different faces to a single doll.

Another innovation offered by Abyss is the ability of the doll to open and close its eyes at the manipulation of the user. This option is a most interesting development in terms of sexual politics. The effect is produced by the insertion of a cable pull mechanism at the base of the skull at the back of the head, presumably out of normal vision range, under the hair. There is a cable for each eye with a thumbscrew, which enables the user to lock the eye into position, and maneuver it open and shut at will.

Through this mechanism, the user can close the doll’s eyes as if it were in the throes of passion. This involuntary human reaction to physical/emotional stimulation has now been appropriated by the controller of the object. The response he elicits from his artificial partner has been induced in as cold and scientific a manner as the response elicited from a lab animal under electronic stimulus.

Abyss has also added to its catalog the “Flat Back Torso” (\$1,099), a headless, armless, legless piece with a flat back to allow for easier transportation and storage. It features a foam inner core and weighs 25lbs., but is only available in medium skin tone and shaved vagina. Other recent

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innovations include kissing and pouting face options and “Flexxwire Fingers,” which allow for repeated posing with no fear of breakage. A she-male doll can be created with a choice of penis sizes. This comes in three options: detachable penis (\$500), permanent penis with testicles but no vagina (\$750), or permanent penis with no testicles and a vagina (\$1,000). Abyss has also offered other expensive accessories such as robotic hip actuators propelled by a USB plug, and computer-controlled speech feedback, with a limited dialogue. Obviously, the accessories are market driven. McMullen listens to feedback from clients and tries to stay one step ahead of the competition. He has vowed to keep exploring the areas of robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The website also offers a range of non-doll accessories, such as hats, posters, a CD sex soundtrack, and T-shirts. These carry slogans like “RealDoll — Art You Can Fuck,” “RealDoll — People Making People,” and “My Other Girlfriend Is a RealDoll.”

The sex doll porn website, www.charliejoanne.com, is based on a RealDoll named Charlie Joanne. This is a pay site offering hundreds of pages of scenarios featuring the host and a small range of gynoid friends in single photo spreads or in doll-on-doll action. Each doll has its own name and character traits, and the site operates around an ongoing narrative structure format rather like a soap opera with sex. Visitors to the site have to register to see any pornographic content. RealDoll also steals the march on its competitors when it comes to celebrity endorsement. New York shock jock Howard Stern gave the product his approval after a live, on-air road test. Mötley Crüe singer Vince Neil showed off his own RealDoll on *MTV Cribs* (a “homes of the rich and famous” lifestyle show) in April 2005. Glamour fashion photographer Helmut Newton conducted a RealDoll photo shoot. However, the resultant images were apparently so uncanny and disturbing that *Playboy* magazine refused to publish them. Finally, at a RealDoll repair site, desperate doll lovers can go for professional advice on how to repair their dolls, no doubt by purchasing the silicone repair kit advertised on the site.

Mimicon

The Mimicon company operating out of Las Vegas is the creator of the CybOrgasMatrix doll (www.CybOrgasMatix.com), derived from the

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terms cyborg, orgasm and *-trix*, the Latin suffix for female. There is only one doll in the CybOrgasMatrix range, which was sculpted in the image of the pornographic film actress and model Pandora Peaks, although the site says that Ms. Peaks does not endorse the product. CybOrgasMatrix uses elastomeric gel with strong shape memory, which it claims is superior to silicone and less costly. Among its features is a pelvic thruster motor and audio capability, which requires wireless headphones. The features of the doll which the company touts include hand-crafted space-age materials, an articulated skeletal system, robotic actuators, and realistic flesh that closely approximates the consistency and feel of human flesh.

The site also includes a lengthy address to potential customers about its target market. A prime candidate for CybOrgasMatrix is someone who desires an ideal but otherwise unattainable sexual partner; is too busy or shy to socialize; is afraid of disease; has an STD; is handicapped, sexually dysfunctional, deformed, disfigured or antisocial; and who seeks immediate sexual gratification from a partner who is always available, always ready, won't make demands on time and wallet, is disease-free, and doesn't want heavy conversations about the direction of the relationship. The company is well aware of its audience and the nature of the product it is marketing.

The only downside to this company is that only one model is available. However, the company avows its commitment to continuous quality improvement and to leading the



Ginger Snow is a high-end anime doll (photograph by Renate, used by permission).

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industry in technical innovation, and it offers test models to clients at a discount price. Like most of its competitors, CybOrgasMatrix offers full and part model dolls at various prices. The range of options at the time of writing includes the regular full body doll, three-quarter scale full body doll, full torso (without head), full torso with backside, breast casting (with or without head), hips casting, and head alone, as well as a selection of skin tones, eyes, eye shadows, styled wigs, lip colors, and pubic hair colors and styles. The base price of the full body doll minus shipping and accessories starts at \$5,500. An interesting feature of the CybOrgasMatrix is a 3D stereo recording of a couple during sex. The website is very detailed and user-friendly. Mimicon is promoting a relatively new website which proffers a *Realistic Sex Doll Buyer's Guide*, hosted by a journalist with an interest in technosexuality.

SuperBabe

Like most of its competitors, SuperBabe (also located in California) claims to utilize a unique blend of silicone to make its product superior. It boasts a skeleton made from stainless steel with articulated steel joints, making the doll lighter than most of its rivals. Like the CybOrgasMatrix, the SuperBabe doll was created from a live model, in this case Vanna Lace, former Miss Nude World, *Penthouse* cover girl and burlesque performer. The doll is 5'5" in height, 56–60lbs. in weight, has a 38DD bust, a 23" waist, and 36" hips. The SuperBabe retails at a competitive \$5,495 plus \$395 shipping within the United States. The doll is shipped with underwear, stockings and a mini-skirt. The customer has the option of choosing the doll's hair color and style, nail color, eye color, makeup style, and pubic hair style. Clients are invited to submit a photograph on which to model the doll.

The SuperBabe is molded in a slightly wider stance to allow for easy penetration and less stress on the silicone in the crotch area. Durability is one of the company's prime concerns. The dolls are created using foam inserts placed over a steel skeleton prior to casting. The foam inserts halve the weight of the doll, allowing for easier storage and transportation. The foam also assists in preventing the outer skin from shifting. Kevlar blended silicone, the same type used to make bullet-proof vests, is applied to aid

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durability. The SuperBabe comes with an optional lifting hoist to help stand it up, to allow for easy storage (\$395).

1st-PC

1st-PC is based in North Carolina and markets its product as a “personal companion.” Like its competitors, it offers the standard silicone skin with internal soft foam and a PVC skeleton. The latter option makes the doll durable and light. Other innovations include an optional ribbed vaginal insert, a repair kit, and the advice that on arrival the buyer should wrap the doll in a warm blanket to maintain a regular body temperature. 1st-PC has several dolls in its line, which go by the names of Angie, Natalie,



Left: Many high-end doll owners go to great lengths in posing their dolls to frame them within a narrative structure, as in these pictures of Kaori on Coverdoll.com. *Right:* Here the same doll is posed “eating” cake (courtesy Coverdoll.com).

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Kay, Nicole, Kiki, and Brandi Lynn. A recent addition to the stable is the special four-foot Sonia traveller model. These dolls range from \$3,000 to \$4,000. Like its competitors, 1st-PC offers a range of body part dolls at lesser prices, such as the torso with head, torso sans head, or the torso traveller with head. Those with specific fetish interests can request jiggly breasts, and at one time the company even offered a set of silicone feet. Customers may also create their own dolls. Shipping costs range from \$200 to \$500 within the United States and \$300 to \$700 internationally. There are a good range of options, including four ethnic types, including Asian and African; six eye colors; three types of eyeliner and the usual range of eye shadow, hair color and style, lipstick color, wig and eyebrows. Dolls also come with complimentary cleaning accessories.

Loveable Dolls

Loveable Dolls is a relatively recent entrant to the market, also operating out of California. At the time of writing it offers two female dolls, Yvette, a blonde Caucasian model, and Monique, a black model, and one male model. Prices are around \$4,800 plus shipping costs. The company has ties with the Japanese doll company 4Woods. The company is a subsidiary of KnightHorse, owned by commercial artist and sculptor Matt Krivicke, former mentor of RealDoll creator Matt McMullen and a former CEO of Abyss Creations.

First Androids

First Androids is a German company offering “synthetic humanoids.” It has eight female dolls and one male doll in its catalog. It has a range of torso options sculpted from the front and rear entry point of view, as well as a transparent crystal torso option.

Mechadoll

Another German company founded in 2003, Mechadoll, offers a large range of solid silicone dolls over an aluminum skeleton sculpted by the

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artist Yves Becker. Its user-friendly and informative website offers the customer a range of choices of eye color, hair color and style, along with a torso option. The website advises that the company is pushing toward a doll that is “fully robotic and equipped with artificial intelligence.” Prices are in the range of \$10,000 plus shipping costs, with plenty of discount options for loyal customers.

Japanese Sex Dolls

The Japanese have long been world leaders in technological development. They have also long held a cultural fascination with robotics and a simultaneous obsession with sex and sexual fetishes. It is no surprise then that the Japanese are at the forefront of sex doll technology. The country even has its own magazine, *I-doloid*, dedicated to sex doll fetishists, of which there are many in Japan. The magazine consists mostly, if not entirely, of photo spreads of doll-on-doll porn, with no living human beings. The title on the magazine’s website literally translates as “worldwide only life-size love doll and artificial beauty specialized magazine for imagination fondling.” “Creepacular,” says website fleshbot.com in its review.

The Japanese are incredibly innovative when it comes to artificial stimulation. They are the creators of the dakimakura (literally “hugging pillow”), an inflatable, life-sized love pillow with the image of a porn star or anime character embossed on it, with an optional hole for love making. And, it took the Japanese to originate the idea of creating a sex doll escort agency. A leading newspaper, the *Tokyo Times*, carried an article in December 2004 reporting on the incipient success of local entrepreneur Hajime Kimura’s Doru no Mori (Doll Forest) love doll escort service. According to Kimura, the four dolls in his stable are picking up an average of one job a day, at a cost of 13,000 yen (\$140) for a seventy-minute service. There is also a more expensive two-hour service. He hit upon the idea because the cost of silicone sex dolls was prohibitive for the average consumer. He reasons that although his rental charges are quite high, they offer the curious customer the opportunity to try a high-end sex doll. He assured the newspaper that he had a number of repeat customers as well as a growing membership list (200 plus and counting).

Instead of being one of many to use the sex organ on the dolls, the

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customer may purchase an intricately constructed artificial vagina which inserts into any of the gynoids on offer. Once used, this is removed by the customer to keep for his own use. This adds to the high cost of renting the unit. Kimura says that his most requested model of the four is the least realistic, the large-eyed Manga-style doll known as Alice, which is said to resemble a child. The happy businessman concludes that he never has to worry about any of his girls not turning up for work. Several other doll rental agencies have subsequently opened for business in Tokyo.

The Japanese were quick to realize the potential crossover market of people who collect toys, replicas and figurines. The sexual nature of the product attracts sexually frustrated collectors. There are at least thirty shops selling sex dolls in the Tokyo area alone, in addition to the companies selling online. The following companies are the current major players in the Japanese sex doll market.

Paper Moon

Paper Moon dolls are deliberately more cartoonish than any other life-sized dolls on the Japanese market, capitalizing on the popularity of the Manga-style comics. Every Paper Moon doll has huge, round, Caucasian eyes as featured in the Manga genre. Like a *Sailor Moon* schoolgirl super babe brought to reality, these dolls retail around \$3,000 for a poseable figure or \$5,000 for a fully malleable model. The Paper Moon dolls are cast in resin and constructed with ball joints to allow for easy manipulation. These dolls could attract collectors solely for their artistic quality.

Orient Industries

Orient Industries (www.orient-doll.com) is the creator of the very popular Candy Girl series. The product has a reputation for remarkable aesthetics. Each doll is highly detailed, with extremely lifelike facial features, similar to the RealDoll, and selling for about the same price, on average \$7,000. Candy Girl dolls are currently not for sale to customers outside of Japan. However, they can be purchased via an intermediary based in the country. The Candy Girl's body parts are made of silicone, while the chest has a special gel inside to make it tactile and flexible. The company website is enthusiastic, but does not translate very clearly.

4Woods

Perhaps the most accessible of the Japanese sites, 4Woods (aidoll.4woods.jp) markets its sex dolls on a global scale. The heads on 4Woods dolls are totally interchangeable, and the models range from “innocent girl” to “elder sister” to “Tsandere girl,” which is a peculiar Japanese term meaning a female personality that is initially combative and aggressive but gradually turns loving and caring. How 4Woods captures this range of emotion in a doll is open to conjecture. The dolls feature two types of vagina, which the company quaintly refers to as the “marriage hole.” The vagina can either be built-in or can come separately as a removable attachment with its own cleaning kit. Some of the main features of the 4Woods doll include individually implanted real pubic hair, silicone pigment make up, realistic breasts using elastomer-gel, and a hyper-anatomical skeletal structure.

The company offers three models. The AI Neo is a dynamic 158cm. body type with a “beautiful glamorous body line,” retailing at \$5,417. The NEO-J is a sleek 154cm. body type with “real and moderate slender girl deformation,” retailing at \$5,250. The NEU(Noy) is a more cartoonish, anime figure with elf-like ears, retailing at \$5250. The skin tones are “nature or Asian sunburn style,” and orders can be placed in English, French or Japanese. The company is very innovative and is continually adding new features and accessories, including four different types of vaginal lips and a “wider and flexible spread of doll’s legs” on the AI model.

Axis — Honeydolls

This company presents a very professional looking website with clear instructions, featuring five doll options. Three are Oriental in appearance (Kaze, Aki and Saori) and two are Caucasian (Cindy and Maria). Honeydolls draws together a range of technical experts in the fields of human sculpting and robotics to create its dolls. Axis has paid particular attention to the flexibility of its dolls. They feature two moveable joints. There is a large amount of flexibility in the feet, hands and elbows, and the bended knee function is possible. The dolls have removable heads to allow customers to mix and match with body types. It is apparently also possible to attach the Honeydoll head to some rival companies’ dolls.

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Honeydolls places a particular focus on the voice-emitting function. This operates via a pressure sensor optionally installed in the breast of the doll. At the time of writing, this option was only available in three of the five models. It consists of an attachable and removal voice speaker and battery box. Connection cables can be hidden behind the wig on the reverse side of the neck. The voice module comes with an SD card with four kinds of voice files. Clients can specify their favorite kind of voice or they can upload their own pre-recorded voice file. Honeydolls has also focused attention on the oral sex capability of the dolls. This involves the use of a medical product known as elastomer rather than silicone, which allegedly allows for a much greater resistance to tearing. Honeydolls retail at around \$7,000 and are available on the Internet.

Verisimilitude

The successful marketing of these high-end sex dolls is centered on their uncanny realism or verisimilitude. From certain angles, the standard new model sex doll looks like a genuine human being, albeit a silent and lifeless one. The dolls have the feel and texture of a real human being, except for their inertness. In this regard sex doll technology has now reached the stage where the dolls are edging ever closer toward becoming automatons. The leading figures in the industry are continuing to explore concepts like motion, visual realism, texture and sound. It will be interesting to see where these Promethean experiments in sensory perception take the sex doll industry next.

A significant development in the physical structure is a completely articulated steel skeleton with stainless steel joints, which allows for a much more realistic positioning of the doll, something that was always lacking in the old inflatable models. Presumably then, the customer can manipulate the doll onto its knees in the fellatio position, or onto its hands and knees for rear entry sex. However, despite all of the advances in technology, the latest model sex dolls are still unable to stand on their own two feet unassisted. Dolls usually come with an unobtrusive stand, which attaches to a small connector located at the back of the neck, under the hairline, which also makes storage easier.

In terms of skin texture, these dolls utilize the most expensive kind

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of silicone rubber for a true-to-life feel. The silicone flesh is extremely malleable, and will move as real human flesh does. The malleable areas of the dolls are reinforced with Kevlar, to make them resistant to pressure. Most dolls come with a repair kit, and customers are encouraged to occasionally apply talcum and baby powder to keep the skin fresh and lifelike. The changeable faces and heads of these latest model dolls are particularly carefully assembled. The mouth and lips are extremely lifelike and malleable. The teeth are constructed from soft silicone and are removable for cleaning, as is the tongue.

Further recent developments in sex doll technology include custom wigs, temporary tattoos, tan lines, articulated hands and closing eyes, all of which are available at a negotiated price on request. The advantage of the custom wig is that it offers a more realistic hairline. Some companies offer to model the wig on a photograph supplied by the consumer. The tan line effect is created by applying multiple layers of special silicone to specific areas of the doll's body.

The companies producing sex dolls offer new options like these on a regular basis. Leading companies are experimenting with movement and synthetic voice technology. Rapid developments in computer power allow companies to experiment with the replication of human muscle movement and synthetic voice technology. For example, voice emitting sensors placed in strategic positions under a doll's synthetic skin or customized mp3 audio files could provide an audio track emitting a response to sexual stimulation. Breathy moans of pleasure, begging to be taken sexually, extolling of the virtues of the user, and other encouraging phrases could be programmed. It is a long way from an actual conversation, but perhaps that is what a doll user is looking for.³

Four

I AM YOUR AUTOMATIC LOVER

Technology and Global Communication

All of the major inventions of the past century have been geared towards making life easier for the individual — the automobile, the airplane, the telephone, the personal computer, the Internet, automated teller machines. All of these wonderful innovations serve to make our lives simpler. At the same time, some reduce our level of physical contact with society. Indeed, one of the anomalies of the Internet age is that it has reduced our interaction with others, while at the same time massively increasing the scope of our ability to communicate personally on a grand scale. In today's world, it is almost possible to conduct our lives without ever leaving the house. Technology allows us to communicate immediately across the globe without having to commute. This can be perceived as a positive or a negative development, depending on your perspective. In his recent book, *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, author Steven Johnson defends the growing impact of technology: "Television and automobile society locked people up in their living rooms, away from the clash and vitality of public space, but the Net has reversed that long term trend. After a half-century of technological isolation, we're finally learning new ways to connect."¹ More people are working from home and we are mesmerized by the immediacy of popular culture. Luxury items like DVDs, mobile phones, personal computers, Nintendo and Playstation reassure us that we have the world at our fingertips. We are now experiencing what the contemporary futurist Peter Schwartz refers to as "the always on, always connected, always available society."² Writer Clive Hamilton analyzes the psychological impact of these developments in his book, *The Growth Fetish*, which discusses the illogical craving of well-off people in wealthy societies to consume vast numbers of unnecessary material possessions.

There is a link between the increase in luxury afforded by a technologically advanced society and the subsequent turnover of its material possessions. We are aware that the majority of the products of our consumer culture have a built-in obsolescence, as they are quickly superseded by newer and better models. The newest item on the market then becomes the latest object of desire. Perhaps a corollary of all this rapid change in the throughput of consumer goods has been the gradual acceptance that our personal relationships are also transient. Alvin Toffler, one of the original futurists, was aware of this concept. "Often, without even having a clear idea of what needs he wants served, the consumer has a vague feeling that he wants a change. Advertising encourages and capitalises on this feeling, but it can hardly be credited with having created it single handedly."³

The advertising industry exploits this feeling of loss and need in the consumer, which is in turn agitated by the ever-increasing flow of information, knowledge and technological development. This begins to have a psychological effect on the individual and works its way into a personal assessment of the quality of our intimate relationships. As we strive for excellence and perfection in our life experience, we begin to see the flaws in those we love. This gives birth to the market for the perfect sensual experience and the consummate sexual partner. In the modern world we have a tendency to turn over our relationships after a certain period of time if we feel they are not working out. In the past, people would gloss over, ignore, work through or merely suffer their differences. Human relationships today are as mutable as our relationships with material goods.

Cybersex

It is no surprise then that technology is molding the emotional to the material in the form of the artificial partner and all the other electronic means of human sexual interaction. The beauty of this kind of one-way interaction is that it removes the emotional pain of detachment when the relationship ends. The desire to cohabit with a sex doll might arise from the brevity of human intimate relationships. On one level it can be read as a desire for permanence, given that the partner has no emotional range and will not grow apart from the consumer. On another level it can be read as a reflection of the impermanence of intimate relationships, in that

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the user makes no emotional investment in the relationship, and can use the sex doll at his or her discretion.

This chasm between the real and the artificial is central to the discussion of cybersex. Writer Lisa Palac outlined the difference:

In the real world, physical attraction is the catalyst that draws us in: If the body appeals to us, then we investigate sexual interests. But in the virtual world this process works in reverse: If our sexual interests match up, then we ask to see the body. As a result, there's an unprecedented openness in cyberspace. Disembodiment, ironically, leads to an immediately greater sense of intimacy.... All the thoughts that could otherwise be communicated with a look or a touch can now be conveyed only with the alphabet.⁴



Cybersex utilizes electronic technology to transmit sexual thoughts and images without tactile interaction.

The merging of sex and technology is exhibited in a number of ways. The proliferation of telephone sex lines is a salient example, as are online chats and dating services, e-mail and mobile SMS texting. The drive for more instantaneous, often anonymous, communication has led to greater increases in the speed of these technologies. We are living in an increasingly narcissistic society, driven by new technologies. The popularity of reality television suggests that millions of people across the globe crave public attention, and many of them are prepared to prostitute their integrity and/or their bodies to get it. Consider for example the revolution in

camera technology. The downsizing, simplification and accessibility of photography and cameras has led to the creation of auteur pornography, where an individual with a small, handheld device and the right connections can churn out hardcore films at a minimal cost. A simple online search quickly reveals that the widespread use of miniature surveillance cameras across the globe has rapidly led to their misuse in collecting and disseminating pornographic images, often without the knowledge of the performers.

What these electronic forms of sexual exchange have in common is their non-physical being. They enhance masturbation by adding anonymous communication. We could, for argument's sake, liken this form of technological secrecy to the old concept of the glory hole. Both offer the thrill of anonymity, although in the technological world, there is no physical contact. The intimacy is conducted only in one's own imagination, in the realm of fantasy. Today's voyeurism is experienced electronically. Rather than crouching in the bushes to observe, we now do it from the safety of our homes at a computer terminal.

There are a number of reasons why cybersex appeals to a mass audience: the thrill of anonymity combined with the pleasure of voyeurism and exhibitionism; and curiosity, and the exhilaration of discovering other people who share similar interests and communicating with them. On another level, cybersex can be useful for the physically or emotionally handicapped, and for couples who are geographically separated for lengthy periods. But all this anonymity leads to avoidance of intimacy and commitment, and the growing social problem of cybersex relationships, which can be considered as infidelity. While cybersex may not involve physical contact, a huge emotional quotient is still involved. This form of sexual interaction can become addictive.

As a simple masturbatory aid, cybersex is a useful outlet for tension without any human interaction. In her autobiographical loner's manifesto, *Party of One*, writer Anneli Rufus reflects on the benefits of cybersex technology for loners:

Unsolicited porn — sexual spam — accounted for as much as 8 per cent of all e-mail traffic in the summer of 2002. Hooking up with a live human being, albeit unseen, to spin on-line fantasies is easy and costs nothing. Whether those fantasies are the garden variety touch me lick me type or travel down some fetish corridor, they make it possible for raving, heaving ecstacy between two — or more — partners to remain a technically solitary

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pursuit, performed in the utmost privacy, the small closed circle of the self. A lot of loners can tolerate only this. It seems, in one sense, simple. *And so clean*. You're home. You aren't hurting anyone. You're only looking.... Cybersex is masturbation with a twist.⁵

Participation in cybersex is in many ways harmless, but there is a potentially sinister aspect to the technology. The participants may never know exactly who they are talking to online. For example, someone who portrays himself as a sixteen-year-old girl could in reality be a forty-year-old rapist. Pedophiles have been known to pose online as children in order to tempt juvenile users into meeting them at a private location, face to face. Because of this, governments have allotted substantial funding to regulate the various electronic media.

In essence, however, cybersex is really about communication and the use of the imagination to interpret erotic messages and images, and perhaps the exchange of those thoughts with other individuals online. Where the Internet excels in relation to other technologies is in allowing us to network with other people instantaneously, either anonymously or visually. It can be a tool for social interaction, where online flirting with strangers can lead to face-to-face meetings. It is not about having sex with computers or machines — yet. At this point in time, the technology does not exist. We simply lack the speed and processing power.

Teledildonics and Robotics

The word “teledildonics” generally means the use of personal computer networks for the purpose of sexual gratification. It is usually used in reference to virtual reality (VR). The term dildonics was coined by a computer technician named Ted Nelson in 1974, in response to the invention of a crude device in San Francisco which was apparently capable of converting sound into tactile sensations.⁶ This is often confused with the term teledildonics, which was coined by Lee Felsenstein at the 1989 Hackers' Conference, according to David Levy in his book *Love + Sex with Robots*.⁷ A succinct definition of VR is provided by Lisa Palac, former editor of *Future Sex* magazine:

VR is a computer generated simulation of a three dimensional environment but focuses on being fully immersive [sic], meaning that all of your

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five senses, particularly sight and touch, are tricked into believing what they're experiencing is real. By wearing special goggles and a glove — the most famous of which were the EyePhones and Datagloves developed by computer scientist Jaron Lanier — a person could submerge herself in an artificial world and interact with it.⁸

One of the first substantial analyses of teledildonics and VR technology was presented by Howard Rheingold in his seminal 1991 book *Virtual Reality*. Rheingold placed great emphasis on the point that a fully functioning teledildonics system would be a communication device between human beings, not a means by which to engage in sexual exchange with a machine. He was also adamant in pointing out how far away our infrastructure was from achieving all the promised capabilities of VR technology: "The most serious technical obstacles that make teledildonics an early to mid twenty first century technology rather than next year's fad lie in the extremely powerful computers needed to perform the enormous number of added calculations required to control hundreds of thousands of sensors and effectors."⁹ Rheingold's postulations are interesting in terms of the advances in robotic technology which have transpired in the two decades since he wrote his book, and of course his text presages the development of the high end sex doll market in 1996, which he perhaps did not foresee.

It is important to keep in mind that teledildonics is but one of the many possible applications of VR technology. The VR industry is also focused on areas such as weapons development, science and medicine, industry, and the financial sector. However, the interest in the more prurient side of the technology is understandable. The invention of the printing press was rapidly followed by the publication of the first pornographic novel. Similarly, the appearance of the first camera soon gave birth to the first pornographic pictures. In his book *The Secret Museum*, William Kendrick notes, "Photography seems to have spawned its subspecies of pornography almost at once: Louis Daguerre patented the Daguerreotype in 1840, and only ten years later, the French government enacted a law prohibiting the sale of obscene photographs."¹⁰ The first pornographic film can be dated to the opening decade of the twentieth century. In her book on the history of pornography, *Hard Core*, Linda Williams cites research which places the earliest stag film arguably around 1907.¹¹

It could even be argued that the possibility of viewing pornographic

videos in the home helped drive the spread of VCR technology. The porn industry has also driven the rapid development of Internet e-business technology, particularly in the compression of files and images, and in pop-up advertisements. All of this technology is focused on the rapid transmission of information, and it indicates how man turns developing technologies to sexual uses.¹² To some the notion of new technology promoting a sexual connection between humans and machines might seem repugnant. At the same time, we cannot deny the fascination that it holds for many others, the exciting prospect of exploring a new sexual or sensual frontier. It opens up many possibilities and promises (or threatens) to add a whole new dimension to human sexuality. In his text, *In Defence of Pornography*, Paul Wilson alludes to the potential of such technology to promote cleanliness and efficiency: "We may not like it but the whole thrust of the information age is to move people away from the necessity of physical contact in order to live their lives and to engage in work. The pleasures of sex and of sensuality cannot be divorced from this process."¹³ Walter Kendrick pleads for accurate representation as new technologies are applied to sex: "Insofar as pornography serves to replace or to supplement real experience, it demands verisimilitude with special urgency. Small wonder then that the manufacturers of sexual images seek out whatever heightening of illusion new technologies may provide."¹⁴ Once the wheels of progress were put in motion, there was no going back anyway. As with every other technological advancement, people will explore this idea to its erotic conclusion, wherever that is.

Sexualizing Technology

It is important to consider the potential impact of cybernetic technology and medicine on the human body. We have already witnessed the integration of machinery and flesh, from heart surgery and prosthetics to penile implants. We are now witnessing the incipient stages of man's attempt to create a perfect sexual machine. Before we try and assess where we are going, it is pertinent to look at where we have been. Humans have explored many sexual avenues before. One of the earliest recorded instances of the merging of technology and sex occurred when batteries were used to provide electronic stimulation to the genitals. Certain cases are alluded

to by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his monumental nineteenth-century study of sexual perversions, *Psychopathia Sexualis*.¹⁵

In her book, *The Technology of Orgasm*, Rachel Maines notes how the nineteenth century witnessed the application of electronic currents to men to cure impotence, and to women to cure nymphomania.¹⁶ It is significant, if not surprising, to see such a complete contrast in intention — the enhancement of male sexuality, and the implicit control of female sexuality. As time progressed, other technologies came to be applied to the search for sexual gratification. The telephone is now a standard tool to sell sex. With the telephone sex line, an anonymous voice (usually female) verbally induces sexual excitement in a presumably masturbating caller. The objective is to keep the caller on the line as long as possible because charges accrue by the minute. The telephone is also used by escort agencies to provide social or sexual partners to paying customers. The deal is verbally negotiated by phone, and the escort is sent to an agreed meeting place, most often the client's hotel room.

In more recent times, the Internet, email and cell phone technologies have also been used. Other one-way interactions between a service provider and a client including viewing booths in sex clubs, where the user pays to either watch a series of pornographic images, or live performers, individuals masturbating or couples and more involved in live penetrative sex. The electronic equivalent of this occurs in the multitude of online sexual services where women offer direct access to live images of themselves at a prescribed, usually escalating fee. The service can be anything from verbal communication to undressing to self stimulation to live sex, all at the discretion of the user of the service.

All of these incidences of one-way communication involve fantasy and the use of an artificial scenario through which the customer fulfills his need for gratification. Sex in all such instances has been reduced to a matter of buy and sell. It is all undertaken for profit. The exchange of feelings within a sexual context, which should represent individual free expression, has been reduced to commodity. We see a growing cultural obsession with not only the timeliness, but also the purity of the sex act. If we consider this in terms of robotics, we are able to conjecture that the demand for a more perfectly functional android sex partner is similar to the demand for other new technologies designed to serve and entertain. We could eventually reach a point where we have reduced sexual interaction to a one-

sided, artificial stimulation. Then we might expect our sexual partners to perform as smoothly as any other kind of mechanical object designed to entertain us.

In 2006, Japanese and Korean scientists began working on the concept of a gynoid with the capacity to make eye contact and to approximate complex facial expressions. Meanwhile a German entrepreneur claimed to have invented the world's most sophisticated sex doll to date. Named the Andy Doll by its inventor, it has the ability to smile, to recognize faces, to radiate human body temperature, to simulate breathing, and to increase its heartbeat during sex.¹⁷ In November 2007, a group of researchers at Japan's Waseda University created a robot that can cook, talk, follow basic verbal instruction and utilize its hands to physically interact with humans. Named Twendy-One, it is a "female" robot. A number of (predominantly American) inventors have been creating machines with the capacity to fornicate with humans, as seen on websites like *FuckingMachines.com* and in a recently published book, *Sex Machines*, by Tim Archibald. Usually, they are a variety of metallic apparatuses with dildos attached to one end. According to Archibald, fifteen to twenty such machines are advertised in the "Mature Audience" section of eBay on a daily basis.¹⁸

This is by no means an original concept. Marshall McLuhan imagined the merging of sex and technology in the 1950s. In his book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, he titled one chapter "The Love Goddess Assembly Line" and spoke of the "interfusion of sex and technology ... (seemingly) born of a hungry curiosity to explore and enlarge on the domain of sex by mechanical technique, on one hand, and, on the other, to possess machines in a sexually gratifying way."¹⁹

In the late nineties, the artist Mike Mosher posted an interesting online piece on teledildonics in which he provided a brief assessment of the history of sex in the computer industry. It is interesting to note the rapid progress made in this regard, from the likes of puerile personal computer games like *Leisure Suit Larry* and *Virtual Valerie* in the late 1980s to the widespread adult content dispersed across the Internet today, and the promise of more tactile interaction to come when VR technology eventually affords it. Mosher was particularly drawn to the inevitable connection of personal computer technology with art, literature, telephony and tools, and exercising power and commercial relationships. He writes, "Sex with computers may thus be infected with issues of power, subservience and

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This lifelike female android was demonstrated at the robot station of Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

service.”²⁰ In this regard, the computer is used as a convenience, a kind of electronic prostitute, to provide immediate gratification so that a busy user can get on with the important things in life. Mosher also refers to the mechanization and commoditization of sex via computer technology, citing examples like virtual strip shows and the use of computers by escort agencies to negotiate with clients and send girls to motel rooms. The implication here is that technology has allowed sex, which should be a democratic process, to be reappropriated to an act of commerce. As Mosher says, “A computer distils all experience into work by alienating us from the physical interaction as completely as the factory or office alienates us from the products of our labours.”²¹ This comment is particularly interesting in regard to the notion of sex posing a threat to capitalism, and the world of work and order. Sex and eroticism draw the individual back to a more primal, chaotic state of being, and as such pose a threat to order and control. Thus technology is utilized to reappropriate this dangerous desire to the capitalist work ethic via regulation and regimentation.

Technosexuality and Robot Fetishism

In recent times a specific term has arisen to describe individuals who desire to cohabit with artificial sex partners. They are collectively known as technosexuals. The modern interpretation of this tendency arose from science fiction. Its genesis lay in the fantasies of men who dreamed of perfectly formed, emotionless, powerful, yet ultimately submissive women. It achieved wider recognition with the rise of the Internet and first came to the public consciousness via the now defunct website, alt.sex.fetish.robots (A.S.F.R.). Technosexuals can be divided into two basic types, known as “built” and “transformation.” The first are those who desire to engage with a ready-made android partner, for sex or companionship or both. The most important dynamic is that the partner is a genuine machine, manufactured solely to fulfil the desires of its owner. The second type desire the transformation of a living partner into an android, either willingly or otherwise. The exhibition of robotic qualities in appearance, movement and behavior forms the gist of this fantasy.

Technosexuality itself involves the fetish attraction to humanoid or non-humanoid robots, or to people behaving like robots, or to people

dressed in robot costumes. It is a form of erotic objectification. The excitement for the fetishist is in the robotic appearance, motion and sound of the partner, or the life-like appearance of the android. Some may be attracted to the android's ability to remove body parts or panels of skin to reveal circuitry. At the present time, all of this is confined to role playing and the imagination. The Japanese are among the biggest practitioners. Some Japanese buy mannequin masks, high quality silicone masks with female features that slip over the head of an actual woman to give her the appearance of a doll or mannequin.

Porn on the Internet

The application of new technologies has also taken the genre of pornography in some interesting new directions. Technology has placed more control, and thus more power, in the hands of the consumer. In traditional pornography, the consumer had no control over the direction of the narrative, and this meant an awful lot of fast forwarding through the text to reach a point of interest. However, in contemporary online pornography, it is now possible for the consumer to have choices and to control and direct the actors in the text. Hence, the user can direct the porn starlet to perform certain acts with certain people at his (or her) discretion. The user can even control what the performer wears. Sometimes the perspective of the camera is modified so that the performer addresses the camera/viewer directly, as if the consumer were a participant. Or an actor is seen only as a disembodied phallus, thereby allowing the consumer to fantasize that he is part of the performance. The implications of this are interesting. Perhaps one day the user will be able to control the mood of the performer as well, to make the performer either dominant or submissive. The future of online porn is all about the freedom of the user. We live in a user-pays world, a disposable, throwaway society. What we must decide is whether all this freedom of choice is healthy, or if it merely represents the selfish pursuit of hedonism to the detriment of relationships.

Consider another online phenomenon, a product known as the KISS doll. KISS dolls are images of various female characters. Some of them are original while others are borrowed from the animation and comic world. The dolls are generally naked or semi-naked. Each doll comes with a range

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of fashion accessories. The idea is to dress them up. The consumer can design new outfits. In essence it is the online version of playing with dolls. However, as with many things online, there is an adult version. Here the dolls are dressed/undressed and put through various routines to elicit predetermined responses. For example a client might undress a female character, and then continually click on her nipples to elicit a response of flushed cheeks and an implied state of arousal. Once this is achieved the character will allow you to remove her panties. Continually click on the pubic region (some of them are very graphic, others not so) and you will bring the character to orgasm. On the same website a KISS doll is dressed in bondage attire. If you manipulate the nipples and clitoris of this restrained doll the required number of times, the animation shows the character reaching orgasm and urinating on itself. What all of this online manipulation of female images suggests is the increasing popularity of the silent and willing partner. It is also another salient example of how cybersex allows for a completely one-sided, non-tactile expression of sexual desire.²²

Porn Creep

An interesting psychological conundrum created indirectly by the impact of technology on society is the condition known as porn creep. This occurs when a man becomes so immersed in the artificial world of pornography that he can only relate to a sanitized, onscreen or online ideal of female sexuality. He can no longer sexually respond to a real woman or engage in a normal sexual relationship. This situation is exacerbated by the mainstreaming of pornography, as it surreptitiously seeps into popular culture. In recent times, hard-core images have begun to appear in mainstream cinema, in films such as *Romance*, *Baise-Moi*, and *Shortbus*, for example. These previously banned or taboo images have appeared with apparent minimal opposition, because our societal attitudes to sex have changed. In a similar vein, pornographic film stars like Ron Jeremy, Annabelle Chong, Stacey Valentine and Jenna Jameson are gaining gradual acceptance as mainstream celebrities by telling us their life stories in documentary or book form, or by appearing in mainstream movies and on reality television shows as themselves. Ron Jeremy, for example, has been featured in several reality television shows, including *The Surreal Life* and the American ver-

sion of the survivor genre program, *Get Me Out of Here, I'm a Celebrity*, while the famous Italian porn star Rocco Siffredi had a starring role in the film *Romance*.

The catalyst for this gradual shift in cultural mindset has been the growth of online technology and the subsequent widespread distribution of pornography into areas it would previously not have reached. Consider the experiences of teenagers before 1980, whose only access to pornography was an occasional glance at a pornographic magazine. Now it is possible for young people to post pornographic pictures on the Internet and distribute them around the globe in a few minutes. In the pre-Internet age, people were forced to use their imagination a lot more for sexual stimulation. The excitement of something unknown and forbidden fuelled by fantasy conditioned their collective responses when they got to experience actual sex with another human being. In contrast, today there is a danger of saturation and over-stimulation in the pubescent mind from the vast range of sexual images on the Internet, hence the advent of a disorder like porn creep.

Porn creep is a symptom of the gradual breakdown of the traditional boundaries between private and public spheres, evidenced by reality television and the desire of ordinary people to reveal everything about themselves to a world eager for salacious material. Porn creep results from expanding global communications and people hungry for intimate details to share with a huge anonymous audience. Inevitably the major focus of all this communication is sex. In *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, Barbara Creed theorizes that the main media outlets of the first half of the twentieth century (film, radio, television, newspapers, popular fiction) aimed to inform, educate, communicate and titillate, while the new virtual media (the Internet, e-mail, websites, virtual reality) are more concerned with immersing the individual in the vicarious experience of becoming someone else.²³ Moreover, by immersing us all in a world of instant gratification, by showing us unsolicited and previously forbidden images of death, torture and sexual deviation, the new media increase our obsession with the taboo. Given this unprecedented freedom of choice and access to information, the human mind will continue to explore new ways of experiencing vicarious pleasure.

In his text *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Terry Eagleton writes that biology "binds us ineluctably together, and in doing so opens up possi-

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bilities of friendship and love.”²⁴ It follows then that the application of technology to sex leads us in the opposite direction. In this regard the sex doll represents the desire to recreate and somehow replace the thing it mirrors, a biologically functional, living, breathing woman. To understand this, it is necessary to step back in time and explore the cultural fascination with dolls and their subsequent evolution. A symbiotic link leads back from the android through the sex doll to the concept of the doll itself.

Five

FOREVER YOUNG

A Concise History of Dolls and Doll-Making

Dolls have been a part of human culture since before recorded history. Before they were children's toys, they had other specific functions. They were used as fashion models, offerings to the gods for newlywed brides, and for other iconic purposes. The earliest dolls were religious symbols for use in ceremonies. Somewhere along the line their religious significance decreased and dolls were given to the children. The literature of ancient Greece has accounts of pubescent girls making clothes for their dolls and offering these as gifts to the gods at the time of their betrothal. The Hopi Indians also engaged in a tradition of passing down their dolls to children following their use in religious ceremony. The ancient Egyptians buried small wooden figures known as Shabti with their dead, to act as servants in the next world. Some of these dolls made their way around the world through trade and colonization.

The earliest modern European dolls can be dated to the fourteenth century in Germany, where a thriving industry has been recorded. By the fifteenth century, guilds of doll makers were registered in the city of Nuremberg. Meanwhile in late fourteenth century Paris, a thriving trade in fashion between France and England was aided by the exchange of dolls dressed in the latest designs. Acts of cultural barter between the queens of both nations are in the records of the French court. The idea was initiated by the French and was used to promote French fashion across the known world. This process was still in evidence in the eighteenth century. Eventually, it was superseded by the development of hand-colored fashion plates and the mass production of fashion periodicals, which started to appear by the late eighteenth century. Rag dolls were the simplest to construct and remained popular for several hundred years. Wax dolls were also popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Germany and later in England, as they were simple to produce. Porcelain was introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and makers in Germany, France and Denmark started placing China heads on dolls by the middle of the century.¹

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The concept of childhood was only “discovered” in the eighteenth century, and thereafter dolls were more deliberately marketed toward children. M.G. Lord observed that until 1820, all manufactured dolls were adults. There was no concept of the baby dolls that would later be aimed at children.² Doll-making became a major industry in the United States around 1860 with the introduction of celluloid, which was later abandoned because of its flammability. Factories in Germany, France, America and Japan produced mass quantities of children’s dolls just after the Second World War, when companies started to experiment with hard plastics and later vinyl. Vinyl allowed doll makers to root hair into the head for the first time. This and certain other developments in doll production are analogous to similar developments in sex doll technology.

*Psychological Impact of Automaton*s

From the Renaissance to the beginning of the industrial era, people were greatly interested in automaton, machines which could give the appearance of movement and speech. In Europe this cultural fascination arose in conjunction with the progress of literacy, commerce and industrialization, and was embedded in the growing importance of science and scientific discovery. In 1540, the Italian inventor Gianello Torriano produced a number of automata, which included a life-sized, lute-playing female. This doll could walk a small trajectory and tilt its head.³ In 1644, the French engineer Isaac de Caus created a montage scene of a mechanical owl stalking a group of smaller birds. Still in France, in 1733 an inventor named Maillard developed a mechanical swan which paddled through water. In 1760, the Austrian Friedrich von Knauss created a mechanical doll that could write up to 107 different words via dictation.⁴

One of the major proponents of eighteenth century automaton was Frenchman Jacques de Vaucanson, who between 1725 and 1740 created a range of automata, most famously a mechanical flute player and a digesting and excreting duck. “The duck could bend its neck, move its wings and its feet, and it could ‘eat.’ It would stretch out its neck to peck at corn offered by a human hand, then swallow, digest, and finally excrete it.... The digestion and excretion processes were parts of a hoax. The corn was held in a receptacle at the lower end of the duck’s throat, while the excre-

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ment was not genuine but some other material that had been inserted into the duck's rear end prior to the demonstration."⁵

Vaucanson was prepared to go to great lengths in order to give his automata the semblance of reality. His replications of human beings would draw unfavorable attention from his peers. The aforementioned mechanical flute player is described in detail in Gaby Wood's *Living Dolls*. It was preceded by construction of a group of dinner-serving androids to impress a visiting dignitary to the Mimines, a religious order in Lyon to which he was briefly attached as a young man. "The visitor appeared to be pleased with the automata, but declared afterwards that he thought Vaucanson's tendencies 'profane,' and ordered that his workshop be destroyed."⁶

Vaucanson had discovered that there was a huge psychological difference in the social impact of a mechanical animal and that of a human being. A comparison between men and machines was not acceptable in the eyes of the church. The moral problems posed by the automata were two. Because it was mechanical and not biological, it could not reproduce itself, therefore it was reductive and against the laws of nature and God. Secondly, because a mechanical being cannot age and die, it challenges the very authority of God. Vaucanson would encounter similar resistance to his flute-playing automaton because a bellows gave it the impression of breathing. Over the course of his life Vaucanson grew so weary of battling the ideologues of the church that he gave up and sold all of his automata to entrepreneurs, who subsequently displayed them all over Europe. They disappeared into private collections.

A similar problem was encountered by his contemporary and fellow French inventor Pierre Jaquet-Droz, who (along with his son and others) produced intricate clockwork automata in the late eighteenth century. Two surviving examples are in the form of little boys, one of whom writes a programmed message while the other sketches four drawings. A third played five different tunes while her eyes moved slowly from side to side and her bosom heaved as if she were breathing. The three examples survive and are on display today in Neuchâtel, Switzerland.⁷

In 1769, the Hungarian nobleman Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen gained widespread fame touring Europe with his great chess automaton. Known colloquially as "The Turk," this upper torso and head of a wooden figurine dressed in Turkish garb sat upon a large wooden box filled with gears and wires. It differed from all other contemporary automata in that

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This reconstructed, working model of Kempelen's Turk was designed by Dr. Stefan Stein of the Heinz Nixdorf Museum in Paderborn, Germany.

it supposedly embodied the capacity for original thought. The machine played chess against all challengers and won nearly every time. A century later, long after the death of the baron and the destruction of the automaton by fire, it was revealed to be nothing more than an elaborate hoax.⁸ The wooden box cunningly hid a chess-playing dwarf who manipulated the arms of the figure. In 1823, Johann Nepomuk Maelzel manufactured a doll that could say "Mama" and "Papa."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, the Japanese also became interested in automats in the eighteenth century with the creation of *karakuri*, or tea-carrying dolls. At a dinner party, seated on the floor in traditional Japanese custom, the host would place a cup of tea in the doll's

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hands. This would trigger an internal mechanism causing the doll to carry the cup to a guest seated directly opposite. The process was reversed when the guest placed the empty cup back in the doll's hands. The dolls were modeled on small children, and released no religious backlash as in Western culture. The Japanese traditionally consider automata more appealing if designed in human form.⁹

The great American inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931) tried his hand at mass doll production in the 1890s. However, Edison lacked the necessary “feel” or compassion for the industry. His dolls, standing 58 centimeters tall, made mostly of metal, with wooden arms and legs, and weighing around two kilograms each, were simply too heavy for children. Further, the delicate talking mechanism — a tiny phonograph inserted into the back of the doll which played a nursery rhyme — was too complex for children to enjoy. The dolls were a failure, and a somewhat disturbing rumor persists to this day that in a fit of pique, Edison ordered all the unsold dolls to be recalled from toyshops and had an enormous pit dug for them in the grounds of his factory.¹⁰ In her book *Living Dolls*, Gaby Wood says of the doll phenomenon, “At the beginning of the twentieth century, dolls were mechanically very sophisticated. Edison’s phonograph had been appropriated by at least two European manufacturers, and others made their dolls talk by means of the bellows patented by Maelzel in the 1820s.... Dolls could walk, talk, laugh, cry, suck on a bottle, simulate sleep and breath, and even ‘digest’ their food.”¹¹

One can imagine the emotional impact this merging of technology and the natural world had on the psyche of the European populace, as rationalism rose to challenge the previously absolute power of the church. As Gaby Wood notes, the shift to universal enlightenment was filled with spiritual unease:

There was an abundance, in the eighteenth century, of manuals destined to train “ordinary minds” in the ways of physics and other related subjects.... But although the Enlightenment project was to remove the veil from what the charlatans had previously peddled, the contents of these manuals were still on occasion called magic — and the general public, one imagines, must have found it hard to distinguish between sorcery and science.¹²

Conveniently, the new discipline of psychology arose in conjunction with the industrial revolution to provide some relief for those confused by all this change. It turned out it was all about sex after all.

The Uncanny

As the father of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud was one of the first to record the uncomfortable juxtaposition of dolls and real people. In an essay titled "The Uncanny," Freud suggests that children are able to overcome the fear of the inanimate because their concept of fantasy and reality is blurred by innocence. To a child, a doll is a real living being and is treated as such. The child's desire for the doll to spring to life and provide companionship overrules the fear. It is only the onset of maturity that allows the adult mind to draw a link between inanimate dolls and death. Reflecting on the iconic use of the doll in primitive cultures, Freud suggested that the doll functioned as a kind of magical double for the individual, an assurance of immortality. However, more sophisticated adults see the doll for what it really is, an image of an arrested state of development.

Freud was influenced by a 1906 essay on the uncanny by Ernst Jentsch, *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*. But he would distance himself from Jentsch's main theme, which was that one of the most successful devices for creating uncanny effects in fiction is to leave the reader uncertain whether a particular figure in the story is human or an automaton:

Jentsch insisted that the feeling of the uncanny is particularly strong in primitive peoples, children, women, the uneducated and anyone with a nervous disposition. Freud, however, took the uncanny to be a fully grown-up phenomenon that occurs when ideas and feelings from childhood that we thought we had discarded are triggered by some experience and so reassert themselves in our minds.¹³

The work of Jentsch and Freud has been integrated into the theories of Masahiro Mori, a Japanese scientist working in the field of robotics. Mori is particularly interested in the emotional response of human beings to creations that mimic humans in action or appearance. In 1970 he published his masterwork "Bukimi No Tani," or "The Uncanny Valley," which hypothesizes that the more lifelike a robot becomes, the more unsettling its appearance is to a human observer. Mori expressed levels of uncanniness in ascending order: zombie, corpse, industrial robot, stuffed animal, humanoid robot, bunraku puppet, healthy person. He concluded that androids should not be too lifelike in appearance or motion.¹⁴ Mori is currently acting as an advisor to Japanese industries on the use of automatons in production work.

Living Dolls

Human beings are drawn to uncanny objects like dolls and robots because they are both familiar and strange. They look more and more like us, but they are not human. Thus we simultaneously desire them and are repulsed by them. Another disturbing synergy between dolls and children is that a plastic doll represents a childlike feminine perfection. This hint of sexual taboo is illuminated by Stephen Heath in his book *The Sexual Fix*: “The point of the little girl is her existence before womanhood, supposedly before sexual life, before the critical moment ‘when the stream and river meet’ as C.L. Dodgson [Lewis Carroll] could put it: investment in an untroubling image of female beauty, avoiding any reality of woman and men.”¹⁵

What Heath alludes to is the notion of an adult woman as somehow unclean and soiled by her sexual nature and by her monthly cycle in comparison to the perfect innocence of a girl. So if dolls on one level represent an arrested, perfected state of human beauty, frozen in time, we need to ask where this desire for perfection arose.

On a simple, physical level, we can see that dolls are free of the ravages of time, which take their toll on living flesh. Being inanimate, the doll is incapable of growth and decay. Thus she never ages, nor experiences the problem of wrinkled, sagging flesh. At the same time that men were beginning to exhibit a covert interest in gynoids, popular culture began to reflect a fascination with dolls. In his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, Eric Partridge notes that the term “doll” was first applied to describe an attractive woman in Britain around the 1860s. In the United States, it achieved common usage in gangster parlance of the 1930s and ’40s. As Jon Stratton notes, “Its meaning was bound up with both the sexual attractiveness of a woman, particularly associated with her use of cosmetic and other fashion aids and a general suggestion of her submissiveness to men’s wishes.”¹⁶ The image recurs in popular culture — from film noir and the literature of Raymond Chandler to recording artists like Cliff Richard with his hit song “Living Doll” (1959). In these cultural references we begin to notice a subliminal link between sex and violence, specifically as it is portrayed in the masculine discourse on women. Women are discursively dismissed as frivolous distractions and the playthings of masculine desire. They are dolls of desire, subject to masculine control at every turn, their subjugation thinly veiled in popular slang.

In 1970, feminist icon Germaine Greer outlined what she defined as the stereotypical woman: "To her belongs all that is beautiful, even the very word beauty itself.... She is a doll ... I'm sick of the masquerade."¹⁷ She reflects a kind of wish fulfillment in the male psyche for the perfectly sculpted beauty of the gynoid, the ideal of a perfect woman. The trans-mogrification of woman into doll is a male-oriented fantasy that is perpetuated by the mass media and sometimes unwittingly reinforced by women themselves. Feminist writer Naomi Wolf alluded to this in her seminal book *The Beauty Myth*: "Today's children and young men and women have sexual identities that spiral around paper and celluloid phantoms: from *Playboy* to music videos to blank female torsos in women's magazines, features obscured and eyes extinguished, they are being imprinted with a sexuality that is mass-produced, deliberately de-humanising and inhuman."¹⁸

The doll is an extension of the notion of flawless beauty in women. She is unable to age. The beauty and cosmetic surgery industries encourage women to buy into the myth of eternal youth. Wolf goes on to suggest that a man enjoying the perfect image of a woman persuades himself that, like the image, he is immortal. "A fantasy mirror made of beauty rather than degenerating flesh and blood, saves him from this self awareness."¹⁹

The human preoccupation with youth and beauty is all-encompassing. No other living creature devotes so much time to an ultimately futile objective. We are mortal. Plastic surgeons make money on those who try to slow the aging process. Celebrities with facelifts and body alterations amplify the public urge to avoid the inevitable. While the desire to retain a youthful appearance affects men as well as women, the latter get the most pressure. Film theorist Laura Mulvey speaks of the cinematic gaze being split between the active/male and the passive/female, with the body of the female star packaged as a perfect product: "Stylised and fragmented by close ups, [her body] is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look."²⁰ While this notion is being challenged by some of the new electronic media, it still holds sway in the more traditional forms of communication. Women are targeted by a range of magazines and products dedicated to the beauty market. The most popular areas for surgical modification are the breasts, buttocks, thighs, stomach, face, eyes and nose.²¹ In recent times we have witnessed the championing of surgical self-enhancement on certain television programs. Shows like *Extreme Makeover*

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give the viewer the impression that appearance is everything as complex surgery is condensed into a convenient half-hour package. Meanwhile, scant consideration is afforded to the psychological effect such surgery can have on the individual. As one plastic surgeon commented in the Australian media: "Our society is moving more towards a drive-through, fast-food, disposable and consumable philosophy."²²

By the early twenty-first century the media began reporting cases of addiction to plastic surgery in the frenzied quest for eternal youth. Botox, a chemical agent which paralyzes the muscles when injected into the body, has become exceedingly popular as an anti-aging device. Western society has experienced a growing problem with a form of mental illness known as body dysmorphic disorder, in which the sufferers believe some part of their physique is deformed or ugly, when in actuality it is quite normal.²³

Contemporary magazines aimed at a predominantly female readership seem to feature a perpetual cycle of miracle diet and surgical weight loss stories. The current cultural obsession with celebrity weight problems reinforces this preoccupation. Women in contemporary society are subjected to great psychological pressure to retain their youth and vitality at the risk of losing love, or at the risk of disappearing altogether, just as aging female media personalities fade from public perception. From starving the body to surgical augmentation, women are encouraged to indulge in unnatural self-sculpting. According to Naomi Wolf:

Around 1990, technology introduced the end of the woman made female body. A woman began to lose the luxury of taking for granted that she had a face and a body that were hers alone in which she could live out her life.... Surgery changes one forever, the mind as well as the body. If we don't start to speak of it as serious, the millennium of the man-made woman will be upon us, and we will have had no choice.²⁴

In 2005, another young feminist writer, Ariel Levy, released a book called *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. Levy's premise was that contemporary female icons like Pamela Anderson and Paris Hilton are guilty of making sex objects of other women and themselves and calling it liberation. Women are accused of buying into the old patriarchal mores that objectified them as items of desire and consumption, and willingly undertaking these roles in the false belief that they are liberating themselves via exhibitionism and aberrant behavior.²⁵

Thus some women are assuming the role of sexualized dolls. The

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rationale is more than vanity, exhibitionism, or the desire to cling to fame. In many ways it is a reflection of the innate fear of age and death. These latter-day surgical body modifications are the modern equivalent of the mummification process. The human obsession with suspended animation continues unabated. The French philosopher Georges Bataille spent a lifetime analyzing the psychological link between sexuality and death. "The idea of a world where human life might be artificially prolonged has a nightmare quality yet gives no glimpse of anything beyond that slight delay. Death is waiting in the long run, made necessary by multiplying and teeming life."²⁶

Perhaps in these words we reach the crux of the matter. The beauty of our world lies in its cyclical nature of birth, reproduction and death. To precipitate the necessary progression of life there must also be decay and death. To avoid the cycle is to invite stagnation. Yet humans continue to try. In today's world, the developing sciences of cryogenics and cloning offer humanity the remote possibility of achieving a kind of eternal life. Meanwhile popular culture abounds with fictional accounts of eternal youth and beauty in shows such as *Twilight*, *Dead Like Me*, and *Pushing Daisies*, where attractive young people portray characters who play with the boundaries between life and death.

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Objectification

In an article on the topic of Objectification, which appears in *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, Martha C. Nussbaum outlines a range of ways through which some people come to treat others as objects within a relationship, or as she says, “seven ways to treat a person as a thing.”¹ They are instrumentality, treating the other as a tool for one’s own purposes; denial of autonomy; inertness, seeing the other as lacking in industry; fungibility, treating the other as interchangeable with other objects of the same type; violability, see the other as something that is permissible to destroy; ownership; and denial of subjectivity, seeing the other as something whose feelings need not be taken into account. We recognize in these the manner in which some men relate to women as objects, and in turn how sex dolls are symbolic representations of this kind of objectification. Given that sex dolls as of now are still inanimate objects, they are understandably treated as lacking autonomy, and yet they represent real women and are utilized as substitutes for real women. Despite the fact that some sex doll owners seem to treat their dolls with affection and anthropomorphize them, it is the dolls’ inability to respond, react or reject which most attracts men. This objectification is mirrored historically in the treatment of women, the “thing” most dolls represent.

Silencing the Female Voice: Women in Advertising and the Mass Media

For much of the twentieth century world patriarchies struggled to maintain the status quo — female subjugation to masculine control. This was achieved in part through economic inequality and by setting up male bastions where women were forbidden to enter. These often were understood but not overt, thus the glass ceiling. However as time passed, cracks

began to appear. The waning influence of religion, the rise of feminism as a political force, and the growing cultural impact of science and reason began to bring down the walls of sexual inequality. However, substantial evidence suggests that the objectification of women still persists across the broader spectrum of mainstream society. We still occasionally glimpse it when we turn on a television set, watch an advertisement, or open a glossy magazine. In the realm of sexuality, gender objectification maintains its strongest foothold. In the area of sexual relations, women are strongly encouraged to adhere to certain stereotypes as objects of desire. To win societal approval and, more importantly, the love of a man, a woman must conform to an ideal image of beauty. Women tend to reinforce this by competing against one another and measuring one another against this ideal standard.

Consider the sexual connotations associated with female makeup and fashion, things like eye shadow and nail polish, garter belts, fishnet stockings, high-heeled shoes, dark and aggressive colors, tattoos, and skin-displaying attire. All of these can be seen as means of stimulation utilized by women to draw attention to themselves, to enhance their natural attributes and arouse interest, and possibly to make them feel good about themselves. Yet at the same time this type of display serves to feed the masculine stereotype about female sexuality, portraying women as some men ideally would like them to be, continually sexually available and receptive. These are extremely pervasive cultural mores.

Through much of the twentieth century, the electronic media, and particularly the advertising media, served to feed and perpetuate these stereotypes for commercial purposes, and in doing so they often portrayed women as chattels or sex objects. The power of this stereotyping lies in its simplicity and its implicit understanding of basic human drives. Stephen Heath alludes to this in *The Sexual Fix*:

Look at almost any advertisement today. It tells us that there is the body ... the woman emerging glistening and heat-drenched from the water, nature before your eyes. All of which sells well, sells a beer, a perfume, anything you like; and what you like is the image ... the nature, the body, the pure sexual state to be attained, attainment being — for this is an image, a myth not a reality — impossible; whence the necessity to buy the beer or the perfume or whatever, perhaps it will help to get us there.²

In the modern advertising industry we see stereotypical images used to sell products aimed at the male consumer — hygiene products, alcohol, sport-

ing events and paraphernalia. It is as if the product itself contains some kind of pheromone, making the user irresistible to the submissive opposite sex. As a corollary, young women are subjected to the message to conform to the latest trends and to exhibit socially appropriate behavior. The rapid spread of online and mobile technology disseminates cultural information at a speed almost incomprehensible to people of older generations and adds to the pressure on young people to fit in with their peers.

Even though the mass media usually only reports (and simultaneously eulogizes and demonizes) the worst excesses, we are aware of an attitude of confident hedonism in the youth culture. Naturally, sex and sexual behavior play an important role. The young are always curious about sex because its forbidden nature collides with their rampant hormonal awakening. The media play on these desires and the models featured in advertising are young and beautiful. As viewers we are constantly reminded that they are what we should aspire to be. As Jean Kilbourne notes in "Advertising and Disconnection," a chapter in *Sex in Advertising: Perspectives on the Erotic Appeal*: "Women are portrayed as sexually desirable only if they are young, thin, carefully polished and groomed, made up, depilated, sprayed, and scented — rendered quite unerotic, in fact — and men are conditioned to seek such partners and to feel disappointed if they fail."³ Indeed, as Kilbourne goes on to assert, the generic representations of beauty we witness in advertising are in fact completely sexless because the beautiful people portrayed have no history and no character. To the casual viewer they are ciphers and they may as well be robots, perfect objects of beauty.

Commodifying Desire

The Canadian theorist Herbert Marshall McLuhan first recognized the market force of the link in popular cultural media between sex and technology. In *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, McLuhan drew public attention to the powerful use of the female body as iconic commodity: "To the mind of the modern girl, legs, like busts, are power points which she has been taught to tailor, but as part of the success kit rather than erotically or sensuously."⁴

McLuhan says focusing on a woman's specific body part transforms

it into a locale of iconic power directed at a male audience to elicit desire, and at a female audience for aspiration. "A long-legged gal can go places," he quotes from a contemporary pantyhose advertisement.⁵ Thus the disassembled parts of the female body are dissociated from the individual woman herself, and become replicable, malleable, adjustable, desirable components like any other material item. There is an ironic link here to the disembodied torsos, vaginas and heads with open mouths marketed in contemporary sex shops.

Another Canadian writer who drew attention to the commoditization of the female body was Erving Goffman, who was particularly interested in non-verbal communication and the language of gesture and posture. In his text *Gender Advertisements*, Goffman spoke of issues like gender display and social reinforcement in the visual media. Goffman was well aware of the symbolic association between sex and marketability, and, foreshadowing Stephen Heath, he noted that, "The implication is that you buy the one, you are on the way to realizing the other — and you should want to."⁶ He also observed that women in the visual media are regularly positioned in a subordinate position to men. Goffman referred to this unstated intention as "the ritual of subordination," and described it thus:

Women frequently, men very infrequently, are posed in a display of the "bashful knee bend." Whatever else, the knee bend can be read as a fore-going of full effort to be prepared and on the ready in the current social situation, for the position adds a moment to any effort to fight or flee. Once again one finds a posture that seems to presuppose the goodwill of anyone in the surround who could offer harm.⁷

There are obvious sexual connotations in the supine and receptive positions of which Goffman speaks. These subordinate physical mannerisms are indeed suggestive of the victim, as if the subject is inviting some sort of hostility or sexual attack. To a certain extent, the traditional, culturally learned sexual positioning of men and women sees women most often in the receptive pose. To a degree this is a biological necessity (given the shape of the respective sexual organs), nevertheless the reinforcement of the stereotypical gender roles in such a manner is suspicious.

Marshall McLuhan saw this type of representation of the compartmentalized female body as a "sort of love-machine capable merely of specific thrills."⁸ Here he accurately foreshadows the creation of the commercial sex doll. If we look closely enough, we will notice just how per-

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vasive is this unstated link between the female body and the sexual machine. Naomi Wolf was aware of this:

Consumer culture is best supported by markets made up of sexual clones, men who want objects and women who want to be objects, and the object desired ever changing, disposable, and dictated by the market. The beautiful object of consumer pornography has a built-in obsolescence, to ensure that as few men as possible will form a bond with one woman for years or for a lifetime, and to ensure that women's dissatisfaction with themselves will grow rather than diminish over time. Emotionally unstable relationships, high divorce rates, and a large population cast out into the sexual marketplace are good for business in a consumer economy.⁹

Control and Consumption

In his book *Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes refers to the notion of the human body as a center of resistance to social control. The body, Barthes argues, is natural and organically functional, and is thus the core of the individual's sense of free will. Sexuality, it follows, is a natural expression of free will. This is why the dominant ideological forces desperately seek to control, contain and suppress the free expression of sexuality. This is especially true in the case of female sexuality, which was traditionally viewed as a threat to the sense of order men had imposed upon the world. Even a text as old as the Bible teaches that Adam and Eve's banishment from paradise was brought on by the temptation of woman to sin. The witch hunts of the Middle Ages were centered on denying the expression of sexual desire by women. All they really achieved was to destroy a thriving industry in herbal medicines and to control the lower classes by spreading fear, suspicion and adherence to the teachings of the church.

Some of the great religions in the modern world still emphasize the need to control female sexuality. Sometimes they dictate the way women dress, sometimes restrict their access to certain places. This type of suppression is generally more subtle in the secular world, but it is still there, in matters like the quest for equal pay and paid maternity leave. The main reason why the moral arbiters of society go to such lengths to suppress free sexual expression and particularly women's desires is that sexual pleasure essentially resists social control. Because of this, society seeks to create

a restricted area where sexuality can function, where it can be monitored and regulated and therefore rendered harmless.

In his reflections on human sexuality, Barthes was heavily influenced by Michel Foucault (1926–1984) a French semiotician and historian who was most interested in the correlation between language (which he referred to as discourse) and power. Using the development of major social institutions like the prison and the insane asylum as a basis, Foucault established that discourse has power because it is used to regulate and control people. Put simply, language divides and categorizes us into opposing paradigms, “us” and “them,” “normal” and “abnormal,” “healthy” and “sick,” and so on. Foucault spoke about this in texts like *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*. In the latter he emphasized that the ultimate aim of reforming a transgressive individual is to provide a docile worker who does as ordered without question, an automaton, the perfect fodder for the capitalist factory, or in the case of the ideal woman, a perfect domestic slave. If we relate ideas such as discipline, organization and surveillance to the issue of sexuality, we begin to see how history has witnessed a considerable effort to exert control over an exercise that is chaotic and free. This is illustrated in establishments such as the harem, the bordello, and the brothel camps that follow armies.

Even more dangerous and threatening to the work ethic is the concept of sex as a form of violence. Sex in essence causes a temporary regression to a more natural, animalistic state. Sex is nature’s way of tearing down the barriers erected by culture. In this way it becomes a threat to work, discipline and order. It threatens chaos. For this reason, it must be controlled, suppressed and restrained. As the Marquis De Sade opined, pleasure mocks at toil, and excess stands outside of reason.¹⁰ The control of sexuality is expressed in numerous ways. For example, women’s economic freedom is tempered by the cost of ideal beauty. Women are rewarded for their physical beauty on the covers of magazines and in advertisements, television programs and movies. Simultaneously, the women who view these images are subjected to psychological pressure to conform to these artificially created ideals in order to gain acceptance, respect and love.

Foucault suggested that the repression applied to sexuality in the Victorian era led to the rise of psychoanalysis, which determined to control sex by categorizing it. This was, in effect, a way of silencing by subjugation. The creation of a vast documentary apparatus became an essential part of

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normalizing sex, confining it to reproduction within the family unit. Anyone who operated outside of the accepted boundaries ran the risk of being labeled as perverted or abnormal, and subjected to some form of official sanction. As Foucault says in the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality*: “To gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present.”¹¹ In other words, the Victorians rendered it silent, hence, the notion of sex for pleasure was transformed by language into wasted, non-productive energy. Sex is not logical. Perhaps in this light we can read the application of technology to sex as an attempt to make it more functional, efficient and legitimate, not to mention profitable. It represents, to quote Bataille, another attempt to reconcile two incompatibles, “the realm of calm and rational behavior and the violence of the sexual impulse.”¹² Stephen Heath posits a similar thought on the matter of the silencing of the female voice in the Victorian era:

Traditionally, the relation of women to language has been one of silence. The Victorian regime was simple: little girls should be seen and not heard, the first virtue to treasure — and demand — in a wife is obedience; the man, head of the household, possesses the power of language and word. Areas of authority of language were then, as before, institutionally closed to women, from the priesthood through to the professions and beyond; and remain of course a site of struggle.¹³

This is why we have pornography and prostitution. These are usually controlled by men, in the legitimate form of police forces and governments, or in the illegitimate form of organized crime rings. Marginalized forms of sexual expression like prostitution are part of the controlled allowance of sexual expression. When sexual habits threaten to step outside of these barriers, for example unregulated street prostitution, the authorities are forced to act and crack down upon them. In her book *Pornography*, Andrea Dworkin refers to the long history of the exchange and bartering of women:

It is fashionable to think that women, who have come a long way, are entirely removed from chattel status. It is fashionable to think that the chattel status of women is ancient, buried with the old cities of defunct civilisations. But in the United States and England, married women were economic chattel through most of the nineteenth century. Married women were allowed to own property — which meant that they themselves were considered persons, not property — toward the end of the nineteenth cen-

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ture, but that was made effectual only in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴

In essence then, sexual expression is considered a threat to production and the orderliness of society, therefore it has always been monitored, constrained and regulated. At the same time it has been a sometimes profitable commodity.

State Attempts to Control Sexuality

In the early years of the twentieth century when industrialism was at its peak, we made a concerted attempt to control production and ensure a maximum output. Economic texts like Frederick Winslow Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* outlined in minute detail how workers could best be used to achieve maximum levels of production. One of the most interesting of Taylor's theories was the notion of breaking down the worker's intellectual attachment to the work and reducing his input to the most basic physical or mechanical response. The worker's activities outside of the workplace such as drinking and sex were a threat to production. They were a distraction for the predominantly male workforce and could cause workers to become indolent and unproductive. Taylor's work heavily influenced the assembly line design of Henry Ford's factories in the early years of the twentieth century. More significantly, Taylor's principles aligned the repetitive function of the factory worker with the clockwork precision of the machines of the industrial age, which was noted by American theorist Peter Wollen. "Taylor was the pioneer of what we now know as ergonomics. By observation, photographic recording, and experiment, he broke down the physical gestures of workers to find which were the most efficient, in time and expenditure of labor power, for any particular job."¹⁵

Another proponent of the global force which came to be known as Fordism was the contemporary Italian communist and political theorist Antonio Gramsci, who wrote extensively about the destabilizing effect of sexual desire and the threat it posed to order:

"Womanizing" demands too much leisure. The new type of worker will be a repetition, in a different form, of peasants in the villages. The relative stability of sexual unions among the peasants is closely linked to the sys-

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tem of work of the country. The peasant who returns home in the evening after a long and hard day's work wants the "venerem facilem parabilemque" of Horace ["easy and available love"] ... It seems clear that the new industrialism wants monogamy: it wants the man as worker not to squander his nervous energies in the disorderly and stimulating pursuit of occasional sexual satisfaction. The employee who goes to work after a night of "excess" is no good for his work.¹⁶

What Gramsci was insinuating is that the time and effort put into the pursuit of sexual pleasure is debilitating to the work ethic, hence the need to encourage monogamy. Thus, if male sexuality can somehow be constrained and controlled, it follows that production levels will be optimum. Those who wished to impose this class-based system on the workers had no intention of being subjected to the same restrictions themselves. History shows that those with greater access to wealth and power are more likely to use their increased leisure time to push the sexual envelope.

However, to boost production, it was necessary for those in control to encourage the perception that free sexual expression was a social aberration and a threat to the very stability of society. This was achieved in a number of ways. One was by labeling certain things pornographic and restricting public access to them. Another was by reinforcing the mother/whore dichotomy and blaming women for tempting men to stray. In some cases, those in power attempted to control and constrain female sexuality to its reproductive function, or to use forms of sexual slavery.

Sexual Slavery

A little over a century ago, slavery was one of the major, legitimate, profit-making enterprises of empire. For men it meant economic slavery and for women economic and sexual slavery. Slavery still exists in the twenty-first century. In fact sexual slavery plays a significant if understated role in the tenets of modern capitalist exchange. This is most prominent in the selling of women and children from third world countries into sexual slavery in the first world, or into brothels in their own countries frequented by patrons from the first world. It is well documented that young girls from poor nations are sometimes coerced or tricked into serving in the sex industry, as is evidenced in a brochure produced by *Save the Children* in 2009:

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In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, there are 10,000 to 15,000 child prostitutes and more than 320 brothels in Hanoi alone. About a third of all female prostitutes are estimated to be between 12 to 17 and the age of sex workers is getting younger.... In Australia there are 3000 children, some under the age of 10, working in the sex industry. They work in brothels and pornography, and as escorts, street prostitutes and strippers.¹⁷

One only has to peruse the advertisements of locally produced sex magazines or the Internet to witness the effect of globalization on the poorer countries of Africa, Asia and the former Soviet empire. These contain masses of advertisements from desperate women, and those who would prey on them, hoping to sell the only remaining asset they have, their bodies.

Sexual slavery has been a significant part of the world economy since the beginning of civilization. It has taken place in ancient Greece and Rome, in the British Empire, in the United States with African slaves and illegal immigrants, and in Australia with aboriginals and the women and children of third world Asian nations. Sexual slavery is generally invisible, but the memory of it is passed on by its victims. Owning another person is both morally questionable and hard to do. Even the mail order bride is not completely under the control of the buyer. The bride retains her free will, and in an information-rich society, she will eventually learn how to express it. But sexual slavery can be seen in broader terms, according to Naomi Wolf:

[The] employment demand for cosmetic surgery brings women into an alternative work reality based on ideas about the uses of human beings as workers, ideas that have not applied to men since the abolition of slavery, before which a slave owner had the right to inflict physical mutilation on his workforce. The surgical economy is no slave economy, but in its increasing demand for permanent, painful and risky alteration of the body, it constitutes a category that falls somewhere between a slave economy and a free market. The slave owner could cut off the foot of a slave who resisted control; the employer, with this development, can, in effect, cut off parts of a woman's face.¹⁸

The Consumption of Women

Another example of the commoditization of women is the way they are sometimes marketed. The advertising media dress women up with the intention of triggering certain appetites. In female viewers, these adver-

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tisements foster the emotions of envy and jealousy. In men however, the intention is to foment the hunger of desire. The woman is proffered as a consumable prize to trigger our sexual impulse. The male viewer is conditioned to associate the purchase of a product with the acquisition of the woman in the advertisement. Thus, according to the advertising, he will be able to own and consume not only the product, but the woman who sells it in the ad. There are even deeper sexual connotations associated with the notion of consumption. Sigmund Freud recognized a subliminal link between cannibalism and the oral stage of infant sexuality:

The first of these [stages] is the oral or, as it might be called, cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization. Here, sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of foods; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The object of both activities is the same; the sexual aim consists in the incorporation of the object.¹⁹

The practice of biting as a mutually pleasurable sexual activity has its roots in the early oral development of the individual, as does the practice of mutual oral genital stimulation. Biting is a recognized cultural signifier, which tells the observer that the recipient is marked for ownership. The bite also signifies a deep intimate link between the giver and the recipient. This notion is most obviously illustrated in mythology of vampires. The bite or mark of the vampire means that the victim has been chosen to prolong the life force of the vampire, and to belong to the vampire as progeny or victim.

There are intrinsic links between cannibalism and sex, and the consumption of food and sex. This is evidenced by the Bacchanalian orgy, where the boundaries between the gluttonous consumption of food and sex were deliberately blurred. Quite often they occurred simultaneously. A corollary of this is the practice of consuming food from the supine body of a woman. The woman allows her kneeling form to be used as a table, the plate sitting on her back. The ancient practice of human cannibalism allowed the consumer of vanquished human flesh to absorb the strength of the victim, and to control the destiny of the vanquished soul. Certain cultures allow the family of the deceased to eat the flesh of the corpse to promulgate the character of the dead relative. There are links between cannibalism and religion, seen in Christianity in the ritual of communion. By symbolically eating the flesh of their God, the worshippers hope to embody His divinity.

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Turning women into a consumable product can be seen as a way of mechanizing women. The sex dolls which were first marketed in Paris in the early twentieth century are early modern examples of the commoditization of female sexuality. Sex dolls are the equivalent of pornographic text performers, prostitutes, and all others subjected to economic control by another. Businesses like escort agencies market their workers as consumable items. The sex doll operates on a similar level. It is presented as an objectified representation of male or female flesh, wrapped up in a convenient package, which can be bought and possessed by the consumer. The first sex dolls represented a deliberate attempt to subjugate sexuality and reduce it to a purely functional, malleable and marketable item.

Seven

SEX DOLL STEREOTYPES

If we broaden this concept of the consumable woman it soon becomes apparent that there are several examples of the sexualized doll stereotype operating across the spectrum of society. What is interesting about the following examples is the way in which they all conceptualize women as a consumable product, an idealized sexual package to be procured by the male buyer. This illustrates the control of the purchaser over the product, and ties in with the types of objectification outlined by Nusbbaum in the preceding chapter.

Sex Dolls Versus Prostitutes

In his eternal search for the perfect life and sexual partner, a certain type of man looks for the ultimate subordinated female, one who is utterly voiceless, powerless, and perpetually available for masculine consumption. Man has always looked for ways to control woman's errant and dangerous sexuality. Sexual slavery and prostitution are two of the oldest forms of sexual regulation. Man's stereotype of woman in her most idealized sexual form, compliant, silent, motionless, powerless, constrained and subjected to the masculine sexual ideal brings to mind two representations of female sexuality, the prostitute and the sex doll. Similarities between the two make for worthwhile comparison.

Perhaps the first and most obvious is that both are perpetually available. They have no free will. They exist in the mind of the user, only to provide immediate sexual gratification. In both instances their compliance has been paid for, economic exchange for their sexual services. Thus it is acceptable for a man, once he has paid for a sex doll or the services of a prostitute, to expect her to be available to him at his discretion. This is an exceptionally empowering position, to have control over another as a result of economic exchange. There is minimal emotional input involved for the user, who merely pays for a service which is enacted at his convenience.

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Another similarity between the sex doll and the prostitute is their non-responsive behavior, obviously so in the case of the doll, less so in the case of the prostitute. The latter may put on a performance and pretend she is enjoying the act, but it remains for her a matter of fiscal, rather than emotional, exchange. This non-response is important for some men who can only physically react to a completely compliant partner. This has links to other fetishes like bondage, necrophilia, and sex murder, which we will explore later. The key element is a sense of power the man gets from total control over the experience. Under a government-regulated sex industry, the prostitute has her sexuality controlled and regulated by the state. She is confined to a certain area and given a specific amount of space and time to conduct her business in a monitored environment. She is then taxed, either officially or by a pimp under other systems, for the monetary recompense arising from her sexual performance. The sex act then becomes nothing more than a controlled form of economic exchange, a job, rather than an expression of joy or a means of procreation. It is important to note that prostitutes operate in either a brothel or escort agency, or on the street, all of which are regulated either officially or by criminal elements.

The life of the brothel prostitute is highly regimented. Clients are permitted a certain narrow allotment of time depending on the amount paid. The brothel has always been a successful way to control and monitor sex. The same can be said for the call girl, who usually attends a client in a home or motel room. The call girl will often be accompanied on these visits by a male minder, who stations himself nearby to watch out for her. The street prostitute usually operates outside the law. The women who engage in this type of prostitution are unable or unwilling to procure a job with a brothel or escort agency. For some it may be a personal choice and a matter of freedom. For others it may be a financial choice, if they can make more money working autonomously. Others may be unable to obtain a job within the regulated industry, for reasons such as drug dependency. This is not to suggest that women with addictions are not employed in brothels, nor that all street prostitutes are drug addicts, but rather that usually desperation drives a woman into the less secure environment of the streets.

Street prostitutes are historically more prone to the dangers that organized prostitution, for all its failings, protects them against, such as rape and murder. Street prostitutes rarely operate freely. Often a male lover

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operates as a pimp, takes the majority of the profit and may treat them violently, as may some of their clients. Financial hardship might be the reason women allow themselves to be subjected to this sort of abuse. By adopting the role of supplier and protector, the pimp can subjugate prostitutes to his control. Their vulnerability allows them to be controlled. They may have the illusion of freedom, but an illusion is all that it is. It is no coincidence that street prostitutes are historically and statistically a favorite target of serial killers.

While the profession of prostitution can be seen on one hand as a rebellion against women's economic, social and sexual roles, in essence it is a system run by men, for men. Female prostitutes may be subjected to brutal male dominance at every turn. This is especially the case for women of third world countries who are sometimes duped or even sold by their families into prostitution in more affluent nations. These women must then repay a huge debt to the brothel owner to buy back their freedom, and are treated like sex slaves until they do. Writing on prostitutes in *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Andrea Dworkin says, "The prostitute is the emblematic used woman, natural in that she most purely fulfils her sexual function; the despised — by virtue of race, class, or ethnicity — compose the bulk of the prostituted; prostitution signifies in and of itself male power in every sphere and constitutes in and of itself a bedrock of sexual excitement."¹

Those who oppose the industry consider prostitutes to be a living embodiment of aberrant female sexuality. They are the polar opposites of wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. Yet among prostitutes there are wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. In his introduction to the 1997 edition of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Terence Sellers says, "Prostitutes are therefore a kind of specialised drain for the excess sexuality of the male population. Without such a drain, distressing, even disgusting back-ups occur. Yet no-one loves that necessary drain. The prostitute absorbs all the 'evil,' so the men can be 'good' again. But the evil, in passing through her, somehow taints her — thus she is, and will be forever, 'bad.'"²

This notion is pervasive throughout the Western literary canon. St. Augustine said, "Suppress prostitution, and capricious lusts will overthrow society." In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas said, "Prostitution in towns is like the cesspool in the palace; take away the cesspool and the palace will become an unclean and evil smelling place."³

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So if we accept that the prostitute is a subjugated and controlled sexual outlet, let us see how she compares with the artificial partner. The inflatable sex doll and her more recent, technologically advanced counterparts offer something almost unique in a woman, total and complete obedience. A sex doll can't have an intelligent conversation, but it will never tell you to take the garbage out or criticize your sexual performance. Advertisements for sex dolls often refer to their ability to provide the user with comfort and relaxation. It will alleviate stress, not just through orgasm, but because it doesn't talk back or reprove. This lack of discourse is important for a man who desires total control. The prostitute, like the sex doll, is receptive and available and totally subservient to the demands of her client (within reason). He pays for her sexual obedience. She is therefore devoid of any threat to his sense of worth. The elements of obedience, compliance and silence are important to some men. Some men require subordination from their partners. They like to feel as if they have total control over the other person. For this type of man, sex with a prostitute or a sex doll is appealing. Alternatively, another type of man finds it difficult to approach women and maneuver himself into a position of intimacy. He lacks social skills. For this type, sex with a prostitute or sex doll is also appealing. For these men, the silenced voice of the other is critical.

Here we notice the first major difference between sex dolls and prostitutes, the voice. The prostitute at least has a voice, albeit a marginalized one. No matter how subordinate her position in the sexual transaction, she at least can control the use of her body. If a client is unclean, diseased, rude, drunk or violent, she has the ability, especially in a brothel, to refuse to take part in the transaction, and to have the client removed from the premises. Even a street prostitute can voice her disapproval, scream, kick, bite, scratch, or run away, or call on the assistance of her pimp, protector or fellow prostitutes, perhaps even the police. Moreover she can refuse to deal with the client or to get into his vehicle if she chooses. Unlike the sex doll, the prostitute can say no.

Perhaps this is where the real appeal of the sex doll lies. The sex doll is the absolute stereotype. It represents the complete commoditization, and perhaps simultaneously, abuse of the female body. In this regard the sex doll is not just a lifeless piece of inflatable plastic in human form, or a synthetic-skinned semi-automaton with a steel skeleton and working orifices, but is rather what it signifies, woman in her most voiceless, pow-

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erless, commoditized form. This is the essence of the difference between the prostitute and the sex doll. The prostitute has some control over the use of her body, for she has a free will. The love doll never says no. She never says yes either.

The connection between prostitutes and sex dolls is apparent. Both can be purchased for sexual use. Both reduce a woman's role to her basic sexual function. Both represent man's attempt to control women's sexuality. Both are seen by their users as objects, providing a sexual outlet. In this regard the prostitute, even though she is a living being with all of the needs, desires, and feelings of a human, willingly becomes as de-humanized as the sex doll. This is why society has trouble placing the prostitution industry within the paradigm of human economic exchange. It is seen as de-humanizing both to its practitioners and their clients, and therefore unacceptable. The man who engages a prostitute willfully uses her as an object. He does not engage her as a person in the narrative, conversational sense beyond the exchange of pleasantries, and the necessary negotiation for her services. She is reduced to an object, a receptacle for sex.

The Women of Pornography

Like the prostitute, the pornographic film actress is another representation of ideal female sexuality. She is compliant and perpetually available for use. She is multi-orgasmic, and able to quickly turn her attention toward what is, or was traditionally the real focus of male-oriented pornography, giving pleasure to men. Like prostitution the pornography industry is another form of institutionalized control of sex. Where it differs is that in porn there is no personal contact although users may masturbate over pictures. Those opposed to pornography believe that it encourages its predominantly male consumers to fantasize that all women are whores. The women depicted in pornography are traditionally considered to be little more than glorified prostitutes, and pornography allows its consumers to ignore the reality which may have driven its participants to take part.

Some say that beyond the bright lights and fancy packaging lies a harsh reality of systematic childhood abuse, poverty and dependency. For every well-adjusted law student making a few bucks on the side doing porn for a few years is an unending supply of abused and addicted bodies,

caught in a never-ending cycle of despair. Like the prostitution industry, the pornography industry treats its workers as commodities. For every tired old porn star there are a thousand more ready and willing.

However, no one consumes pornography for this reality. The predominantly male audience is drawn to the fantasy of a woman who is perpetually available, who is always willing to meet sexual demands on cue, who never says no or critiques male performance. On another level the pornographic film actress represents the fallen woman, a wanton nymphomaniac who seems out of control, even though her responses are in reality highly controlled. Men fantasize about this kind of idealized submissive (or dominant) woman.

The pornography industry is economically significant not only because it generates billions of dollars annually, but also because it is ubiquitous. Thanks to the ever-expanding avenues of technology it has an enormous influence on the way in which we view sex and the female body. In many ways pornography, being a male dominated industry, is essentially about man's search for the ideal woman, the ideal sex partner, often the most wanton, lustful or degraded type of woman. It is also about the masculine control of women and their bodies, and by association, their sexuality. This is achieved by writing about, photographing and filming sex, and making a profit.

The pornography industry divides moralists, socially conservative governments and conservative feminists on the one hand from social libertarians, academics, sociologists, pornography performers and progressive feminists on the other. The first groups says that pornographic images have a deleterious effect on the psyche (particularly the male), encourage sex crimes, and denigrate women's sexuality and portray it in a negative light. The second group argues that pornography forms part of our sexual fantasies and is liberating, educational and essentially harmless.

The arguments for and against pornography have been continually revisited by civilized governments over the past half-century, and will undoubtedly continue to be debated. In his all-encompassing study of the pornographic genre, *The Secret Museum*, the American academic Walter Kendrick suggests, "Forgetfulness of the past is the most deplorable feature of twentieth-century arguments about the subject."⁴ Kendrick goes on to make another valid point:

Prior to the eighteenth century, no distinction was made between books banned for their political or religious content and those prohibited on

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moral grounds.... Insofar as obscenity attracted the attention of censors, it usually did so in tandem with abusive polemic. This was the proper place of gross sexual reference for the Greeks and Romans; it remained there until the Victorians, sifting out the “sexual” from other modes of being, sought to identify in “pornography” an object worthy of censorship but free of obvious political or religious power.⁵

To take the negative perspective first, it has been argued that pornography in its many guises is, at its worst, violence perpetrated against women. This was the line taken by anti-porn feminists like Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin in the 1980s, and occasionally taken up by detractors ever since. Dworkin posits that pornography is not just the cause of violence against women, but that it literally is violence against women. Snuff films, rape scenarios and child pornography are the worst excesses of the genre, but even without these, violence is still implied in many pornographic representations of women. In most of its depictions, pornography degrades women by representing them as a commodity for masculine consumption. In the majority of porn films, men are dominant and women receptive in the suggested representation of sexual exchange.

While there are certain valid arguments pertaining to women’s sexual pleasure and sexual expression, and their willingness to participate in the pornography industry, there is no escaping the many negative images pornography offers of women. Pornography gives the impression that all women are sexually available to any man who wants them. Common scenarios tell viewers when a woman says “no,” she really means “yes.” Pornography has an impact on the way men and women think about sex. In her book *Woman’s Experience of Sex*, Sheila Kitzinger says of women’s fantasies:

Women seem to have fantasies about being dominated and brutalised, for example, far more than men do, and this mirrors something about the relations between men and women in our society.... The fantasy material on sale for men in newsagents typically depicts them overpowering women who are either virgins or whores and magazines like *Playboy* talk about sex using military metaphors — surrender, dominance and mastery.... Because we live in a violent world in which women really are raped and battered by men, it is understandable that many of us feel bad about our masochistic fantasies.⁶

Constant exposure to violent sexual images can in some way normalize them to viewers of both sexes, and increase the possibility of both sexes finding such images sexually stimulating.

Pornographic depictions pretend to capture the essence of the female

orgasm on film. The American academic Linda Williams wrote a detailed account in her history, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure & the Frenzy of the Visible*. She believes that pornography traditionally struggled to encapsulate female sexual pleasure because its point was to provide stimulation for men. Some argue that any attempt to show female pleasure is facile. Naomi Wolf says that pornography and other more legitimate forms of female exploitation (mainstream cinema, television and advertising) have singularly failed to capture female sexuality. "Rather than seeing images of female desire or that cater to female desire, we see mock-ups of living mannequins, made to contort and grimace, immobilized and uncomfortable under hot lights, professional set-pieces that reveal little about female sexuality."⁷

This notion that pornography is an exclusively male domain may only be one way of seeing the porn industry, but it is a valid one. The feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey speaks of it this way: "All of the normalised perversions of dominant narrative cinema are, ... defence mechanisms — 'avenues of escape' — for phallically threatened male viewers."⁸ A similar point is made by the Australian academic Paul Wilson: "Porn fantasy is like much of the other fantasy that we watch on the media. The imaginary encounters that we create in our mind or construct from media messages are essential ingredients of psychic sanity and survival. Every day we all help ease the traumas and fears in life by fantasizing about imaginary scenarios that remove us from the drudgery and pain of human existence."⁹

Another film theorist, Steven Marcus, whose work focused on nineteenth century pornography, evoked that era's fear of an approaching dystopia of sexuality as evinced by assertive women pleasuring themselves with the aid of "mechanical-electrical instruments."¹⁰ Some Victorians viewed the use of masturbatory aids and their ilk as a symptom of an alienated consumer society.

At the same time, some female performers insist they are empowered by their work and the accompanying paycheck, and suffer no physical or emotional harm from their participation. Some women even find personal satisfaction in their performance.¹¹ Indeed, numerous actresses in the pornography industry have moved from performing in front of the camera to directing their own porn films. These women bring a fresh, female perspective to the genre. The pornography industry is an arguably legitimate and profitable business which offers incomes which many of its performers would probably struggle to attain in any other field of employment. The

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majority of actors go into the business of their own free will and can leave at their discretion.

The biggest mistake made by moralists and anti-porn campaigners is their assumption that sex is an unwelcome act of violence perpetrated on women by men. The truth of the matter is that women enjoy sex as much as men, and that sex itself is an aggressive act. It is perhaps the closest we come to re-visiting our animal instincts. It is the rare moment when we revert to a more primitive state. The physical and emotional high good sex can bring is healthy when it is fully consensual. Ultimately as viewers and as individuals we must decide for ourselves whether a pornographic image is degrading or liberating.

Some would argue that pornography can provide a positive image of women enjoying their sexuality, and that it can educate men on women's bodies and how best to stimulate them. The problems with pornography arise from those in control of the medium. As William Kendrick writes:

The second question asked was, what will happen if vulnerable people see these things? ... The answer came as quickly as the question: depravity will settle upon women, children and the poor (they are predisposed to it); lust will flower in them (they bear its seeds already); they will rise up in wantonness, wrecking the achievements of three millennia — including us, their appointed guardians.... Gentlemen could be trusted not to tear the edifice down, because gentlemen owned and had built it. If lust should enflame them too, there was still no risk; sluices like prostitution were waiting to receive it. "Pornography" was the name they gave to the strange zone where chaos subsisted safely within order.¹²

When it comes to the question of censorship, we appear doomed to continually revisit the same arguments. As journalist David Marr puts it: "Who of us needs Pornoy to learn how to masturbate or heavy metal to plant the idea of committing suicide? Our bodies give us most of what we need to know about sex, and what our bodies don't tell us we pick up in the playground. The history of censorship is a history of failure."¹³

The advent of the Internet has reopened the debate on censorship. It is easy to understand the fear of the potential access by children (the masters of new technology) of every kind of violent and prurient image imaginable. Moreover, the Internet has had a radical effect on the genre itself. Pornography is an enormously profitable online industry. According to a piece in *Forbes* in 2006, online pornography generated about \$1 billion a year, with at least 260 million adult sex pages on the Web.¹⁴ Accordingly, pornography

is one of the drivers of new technology. The Internet is a great generalizer, but consumers must pick and choose their sources of information wisely. As Laurence O'Toole notes in his assessment of the pornography industry, *Pornocopia*: "The expansion of the new technologies ... is allowing porn to emerge from the shadows as an acceptable form of popular entertainment — out of the red light district and into the sitting room."¹⁵

Like any other industry, pornography has been forced to adapt to meet the demands of a changing world. Once it was an exclusively male domain, from private men's clubs to seedy cinemas. Now it's a pervasive global medium, speaking as much to women as it does to men. Technology has been key in introducing pornography to a female audience. Home-based digital technologies have not only allowed women to consume pornography, but also to produce it themselves. The Internet has negated the necessity of going to a sex shop to purchase pornography, which previously discouraged a majority of women from becoming consumers. And digital technology has allowed many women to make their own pornographic videos at home and upload them to the Internet, either for profit or for exhibitionist purposes. This paradigm shift away from male exclusivity has not only given women greater access to pornography, it has also given them some control over the genre and their participation in it.¹⁶

At the same time, the majority of contemporary pornography is still produced from a male perspective, with emphasis on multiple penetrations, anal sex and the money shot. Even the impact of progressive feminism in the guise of raunch culture and the Riot Grrrl movement, an aggressive attitude adopted by women in regard to sex, has failed to completely shift the dynamics of the porn industry. Whether the portrayal of women and their place in the new era of porn is empowering or imprisoning is, as ever, open to conjecture. Ultimately, what gives porn its staying power is the element of fantasy it affords. Pornography is a powerful stimulant to men because many like to fantasize about women who are perpetually receptive and sexually available. Some men want to see beauty tarnished and innocence corrupted in their fantasies. People of both sexes are stimulated by seeing others engaging in sex. They know it isn't real but are willing to suspend disbelief and buy into the fantasy.

Most consumers of pornography are not interested in the real lives of the performers. Many male viewers want to see women metaphorically degraded and abused, used like sex toys. Most of all, they want to see and

hear women enjoying it. Viewers can fantasize about a woman performing sex acts without ever having to worry about having to satisfy her. This links the porn actress to the prostitute and the sex doll — that one-way communication, leading to masturbatory perfection, the non-responsive partner, and the power of control.

Mistresses

The mistress occupies an intriguing role in the paradigm of male sexuality. In many ways she is similar to a prostitute or a sex doll. However unlike a prostitute, she is expected to be faithful. Her affections are bought and paid for, and quite often she is deliberately situated in a controlled space where her paramour can gain access to her at his will. She is generally of a lower social class than her paramour. The mistress is customarily the chattel of a wealthy married man, and her living expenses are paid in exchange for her sexual services. Occasionally she might provide emotional support, but generally a mistress is considered a sexual partner, while a wife or chosen life partner is considered an emotional partner.

The concept of the mistress is another example of man's tendency to separate notions of love and sex — the mother/whore dichotomy. The mistress performs sexual functions that a wife might choose not to provide. A wealthy or powerful man might have several mistresses at once. In his book *A Dictionary of Idiocy*, Stephen Bayley defines the origin and function of the mistress in polite society:

The mistress was an invention of the first age of mass-consumption when, suddenly, everything was for sale (at a price). Mistresses were a product of the division of labour, an opportunistic creation of the same urban industrial society that gave us the department store and railway timetables and every other hierarchical, bureaucratised institution. The nineteenth century creation of the mistress was one reaction to the schizophrenia which urban industrial cultures imposed on women: mother? companion? lover? whore? The mistress offered a solution: separation of love and sex, of man and animal.... She takes her place in the history of venal sex, alongside the "common" prostitute.¹⁷

The mistress is essentially a sexual fantasy brought to life, a perfect sexualized doll. She exists only to fulfill a basic sexual function. Thus she brings to the liaison none of the emotional baggage which encumbers a regular

relationship. The mistress is like a sex doll; she is essentially a sexual object. Financial recompense is the price of her complicit silence and obedience. The relationship between a man and his mistress is essentially reductive, because it is not equal. The man remains in a position of power throughout, and takes without giving much emotionally in return as he would with a sex doll or prostitute. This kind of tryst remains in the honeymoon period, because the lovers by necessity see one another infrequently. Thus the basic sexual hunger can last longer, with a repeated sense of anticipation of a forbidden pleasure. When this hunger begins to dim, the relationship is usually ended by the dominant figure. In a regular union, a couple moves past this and negotiates on equal footing, finding more than simple sexual desire as a basis to maintain and grow the partnership.

Often the tragedy of the mistress is her desire to usurp the wife and take her place. She then becomes exactly what her paramour seeks to escape. She wants to end her role as sexualized doll and be loved as a complete person. But the man who engages her as a mistress is generally unable to see beyond her role as sexual object. At the same time, the mistress is perceived by society as nothing more than a sex object, the “other woman,” the slut, the home wrecker. Thus she is ostracized both within and outside the relationship. To the man, she is essentially a chattel — a plaything or dalliance. To the outside world, she is a threat to the sanctity of marriage and therefore something to be despised.

Mail-Order Brides

The mail-order bride is a variation on the concept of the arranged marriage. It generally consists of an agreement or contract struck between a woman from an underdeveloped nation and a socially awkward but financially secure man from a better-developed country. Brides tend to come from Africa, Central and South America, and some of the poorer nations of Asia, as well as the former Soviet Bloc nations in Eastern Europe. Immediately after the collapse of the Communist world a large influx of eastern European women poured into the pornography and prostitution industries of the West. Women who are desperate to better themselves enter into these arrangements by listing themselves in a catalog or with a marriage agency, all accessible today via the Internet.

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The mail-order bride is similar to the sex doll, prostitute, and porn actress in that she is marketed as a product. She is purchased from a catalog and shipped off to the customer. Her status approaches that of a prostitute because of the level of sexual expectation placed upon her by the proposed husband. Most women who offer themselves as mail-order brides probably do so out of desperation to escape poverty, but with honorable intentions. However, some men who buy a mail-order bride do so expecting to get a sexual chattel.

Mannequins

The mannequin¹⁸ is an unusual sexual object. Obviously the mannequin is not living flesh but a representation of it. Yet history suggests that the mannequin has always been an erotic icon. The original man-



The mannequin embodies an accurate visual display of sexual possibility.

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nequins were used to market items to women, and most if not all early mannequins were female in design. There is an unspoken connection between mannequins and sex dolls. While the mannequin only represents the imaginary possibility of sexual liaison, for the Pygmalionist, it provides sexual possibility. Indeed, there is a certain similarity between a display of mannequins in a shop window and the display of the living flesh of prostitutes in similar windows in red light districts.

This illusion of sexual availability, in conjunction with the mannequin's anatomical similarity to living flesh, tempts the type of man who is drawn to a non-responding partner. The earliest mannequins were made from wax, and typically consisted of a female torso without a head. The material for sale was literally draped over the wax torso. Wax torso figures were in evidence as early as 1902, but were not popular until World War I, when improved technology made them more durable and lifelike.¹⁹

The roaring twenties saw heads added to the dolls to show off wigs in the latest styles. At this time mannequins became more alluring and realistic, to mirror contemporary notions of feminine beauty. Sometimes facial expressions were added, to make the figure appear to smirch or pout. By the 1930s, the marketing and retail industries were selling to the average female customer through a perfect, sexualized body image. As Gail Reekie notes:

By the 1920s it was evident in a number of discourses that public reticence about sex had declined and (predominantly married) female sexual expression was socially accepted. This "new presence of the erotic in the public realm" was linked to the emergence of a consumer society. The acceptance of pleasure, self-gratification and personal satisfaction were easily translated to the province of sex.²⁰

Thus the twentieth century begins a growing synthesis between the image of women as dolls and as items of consumption. While such a notion was hinted at in earlier times, the growth of technology afforded the opportunity to turn fantasy into reality.

Hence we can acknowledge in the mannequin a link to both the statuesque beauty of the Amazon and the cold detached beauty of the gynoid. We can understand the secret sexual liaison between men and mannequins, and the sporadic news reports of men caught publicly masturbating over mannequins in shop windows, and of people caught fornicating with marble statues. The nineteenth century French writer Theophile Gautier

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extolled the advantage of the living automaton over the inert statue in his risqué novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835). Speaking through the protagonist, D'Albert, he writes:

I consider woman, after the manner of the ancients, as a beautiful slave designed for our pleasure. Christianity has not rehabilitated her in my eyes. To me she is still something dissimilar and inferior that we worship and play with, a toy which is more intelligent than if it were ivory or gold, and which gets up of itself if we let it fall. I have been told, in consequence of this, that I think badly of women; I consider, on the contrary, that it is thinking very well of them.²¹

Gautier's novel was written in praise of the ideal of feminine beauty. However, D'Albert does draw a number of interesting and amusing parallels between women and mannequins: "A woman possesses the unquestionable advantage over a statue, that she turns of herself in the direction that you wish, whereas you are obliged to walk around the statue and place yourself at the point of sight — which is fatiguing."²²

The mannequin appears on the scene around the same time as the first modern sex dolls were being secretly marketed to a select clientele, at the exact moment when sex itself begins to be recognized as a marketing force and a consumable item. Simultaneously, cinematic films like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) created a public forum for men to fantasize about gynoids, with its powerful images of robotic women ultimately subjected to masculine control. The reasons why men have made such a conscious and protracted attempt to reduce women to basic sexual function are many and various. In order to examine them, we need to delve further into the psychology of the male sexual impulse.

Eight

THE VAGARIES OF MASCULINE DESIRE

*Probably no male human being is spared the terrifying shock
of threatened castration at the sight of the female genitals*
— Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” 1927

Sex is like no other subject in the field of human experience, simultaneously promising exquisite pleasure for some, and bringing untold terror for others. It preoccupies many people’s minds for a large percentage of their time. They are either doing it, talking about it, thinking about it, or watching other people do it. It is a field in which a great many professionals in the field of psychology make a living, usually from other people’s misery. The human sex urge is amazing and multifarious, fuelled by the imagination rather than mere biological impulse. The kinds of sexual peccadilloes which have been catalogued is quite astounding. As we saw in the opening chapter, some sexual perversions are related to the non-responding partner, and we turn to these to understand this urge.

One of the first questions the casual observer might ask is why a person would want to have intercourse with a sex doll. After all, they are lifeless representations of the human form which offer no physical or emotional response to the sexual ministrations of the user. How could any person find a non-tactile, non-responsive sexual partner stimulating? This is not to suggest that every man who uses a sex doll is unable to conduct a normal relationship. While it is impractical to report accurate statistics, website and documentary evidence seems to indicate that some men use sex dolls in addition to regular sexual relationships with other human beings. Yet for many men resorting to relationships with a doll or dolls does have psychological implications. What sort of a man would be a typical user of a sex doll, if indeed there is a stereotype? In this regard, let us examine some of the hypothetical benefits of a sex doll as opposed to a human partner.

Convenience

We have previously discussed convenience and emotional detachment when comparing prostitutes and sex dolls. Avoiding responsibility and courtship can be appealing to some men. David Levy noted this: "To avoid any necessity to indulge in games in the pursuit of a sex partner, for the avoidance of what are often perceived as being constraints and complications in more conventional sexual relationships and in the interest of limiting the nature and duration of any emotional involvement to whatever extent is wanted by its owner, a robot will be the ideal sex partner."¹

A doll provides the security of an absolute guarantee of sex without the necessity to woo a woman with the possibility of rejection after a deal of time and effort. Some people prefer a life of solitude and are content with their own company. For them, a sex doll may be a good substitute for a human relationship, without the conflicts that emotional attachment can bring but offering privacy and convenience. In the modern world we have become used to rapid change and advancement in technology. The younger generation are even more accustomed to constant change, and appreciate that we live in a high demand, throwaway society.

The demand for immediate gratification and the expectation of rapid change appear to be seeping into other areas of society, and have impacted the durability of human sexual relationships. This theory of transience was first suggested by the social historian Alvin Toffler in his epoch-spanning trilogy *Future Shock* (1970), *The Third Wave* (1980) and *Powershift* (1990). Toffler was among the first thinkers to acknowledge the psychological impact of built-in obsolescence, with material objects and human relationships. He foresaw the ephemeral nature of our modern connection to material possessions and relationships in comparison with past generations, who seemed to experience a much greater longevity in their associations with objects and people. "The people of the past and present lead lives of relatively 'low transience' — their relationships tend to be long lasting. But the people of the future live in a condition of 'high transience' — a condition in which the duration of relationships is cut short, the through-put of relationships extremely rapid. In their lives, things, places, people, ideas and organizational structures all get 'used up' more quickly."²

Toffler was insightful in his assessment and the passing of time has proved him right. We live in an almost permanent state of flux in today's

world. This is particularly noticeable in sex and marriage. Changing perceptions of morality (reflected in the divorce laws) have had a definite effect on the durability of relationships. It is no longer a social stigma to engage in several marriages or sexual relationships over a lifetime. Single parent families have become closer to the norm, rather than an exception, as have childless marriages. Indeed marriage itself is no longer mandatory in social circles. Toffler also emphasizes the increasing pace of life. Ever-improving technology not only affords us the opportunity to continually upgrade and increase our exchange of knowledge and information, but it simultaneously creates and feeds a desire for more information at an exponentially faster rate. This state of perpetual motion can lead not only to a general feeling of impatience, but also to a sense of information overload and a longing for a gentler life and a sense of peaceful wellbeing. With the ever-increasing pace of life it is hard to maintain what we perceive as an acceptable level of personal satisfaction. Indeed we are conditioned to aspire. The ideology of capitalism consistently reinforces the message that we must never be satisfied with what we have, and that we must endlessly consume, compete and accumulate.

In this regard man's desire for control over every aspect of his life naturally extends to his sexual life, given that sex and relationships are a significant aspect in the lives of most individuals. Humans are interested in who is intimate with whom and there is an element of competition involved. Men seek the perfect partner, or at least one who is perfect for them. From the desire for perfection comes the urge to control and for some men when it all seems too hard they yearn for a woman who not only obeys but who retains forever her state of perfection, a woman who is as beautiful today as she was the day they met. This is why interest in gynoid development has increased over the past decade, and why entrepreneurs are prepared to pour so much time, effort and money into their production and continued improvement. Just as many new technological gadgets are designed with convenience in mind, convenience is one of the foremost selling points in sex doll advertising. The individual can create an ideal woman with no mind or voice.

Sexual Diseases and Fidelity

One of the downsides of human sexual interaction is the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The more sexual partners,

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the greater the threat of contracting an STD. Even prophylactics and other contraceptives fail to provide an absolute guarantee of protection. With the advent of global communication, people have become much more aware of the health risks sexual promiscuity can bring. This became clear two decades ago with the explosion of AIDs. However, a sex doll presents no such danger. Once the product is purchased it provides an always available sexual outlet and offers the equivalent of absolute fidelity. All the user has to do is keep the doll clean, and it will give a lifetime of safe sexual service. For some, such safety may be paramount. And the notion of fidelity is also quite significant. One of the major causes of domestic violence and relationship breakdown is sexual jealousy, the fear that your partner prefers someone else because of your real or imagined inadequacies. No such problems arise with an artificial partner. At the same time, the doll user does not have to reciprocate the fidelity. He can have sex with as many dolls or real women as he likes. Another benefit of sex with a sex doll is elimination of the risk of unwanted pregnancies.

Financial Considerations

A relationship can be expensive because companionship involves more than just sex. Couples tend to do things like eat meals in restaurants, go on holidays together, move into apartments or houses, and have children. Even a brief seduction will likely incur some expense. In some cases, sex costs money, and the more sex you want, the more it costs. In contrast, however, the sex doll requires only the initial outlay and then it is yours forever. Man cannot buy the heart of woman, but he can own the synthetic flesh of a love doll. Perhaps this is why some men are prepared to pay a large amount of money for high-end sex dolls. For these men, the single payment for ownership is a worthwhile investment for what they get in return.

Doll Users Speak

To better understand why some men and women use sex dolls, I obtained permission from the moderator of a prominent doll users' web-

site to create a blog and post a survey questionnaire. Subscribers were invited to respond anonymously. The following is a sample of the responses.

The Respondents

Respondent A is a 61-year-old disabled father and grandfather who had two marriages and one long-term relationship before turning his attention to sex dolls.

Respondent B is a middle-aged European male.

Respondent C is in a regular relationship as well as being intimate with his sex dolls.

Respondent D is a 40-year-old woman who recently discovered high-end dolls.

Respondent E is a young woman who shares her interest in sex dolls with her boyfriend.

Survey Questions and Responses

1. When and where did you first discover the existence of sex dolls?

A: Assuming you are talking about the high end silicone dolls, maybe 9 to 12 years ago. There were two [separate] programs on Australian television within that timeframe about the dolls. One was called *Guys and Dolls (Love Me, Love My Doll)*, I do not remember the name of the other documentary. I was married at the time.

B: I know of the existence of inflatable dolls since I'm a kid, even if I never owned one. But I discovered the silicone dolls in 2003 or 2004 when seeing a TV report.

C: Blow ups, in my teens. Realistic silicone, I'm not sure if I read about them in *Playboy*, or saw them on HBO or Howard Stern first.

D: Well, I cannot remember exactly but I would be safe in saying it was in my youth, preteens. Like all children you snicker at naughty words. You do the same with such a subject as this, given that back then love dolls were mostly if not all blow-up types, cheap, not exactly a close match to anything depicted on the box. Then there is the time you go through your teens ... you are subjected to peer pressure and tend to some extent to go along with the stereotyping of those who would get and have such things

and continue the negative views already put about without any real consideration of another's situation.

E: The Internet, about 2 years ago.

2. How old were you when you first realized that you were attracted to dolls and what feelings did it evoke in you?

A: In hindsight, there has always been an attraction with the female shape in doll form going way back. Of course it was not realized or a conscious feeling at the time. A micro second look at a Barbie doll, a brief head turn when seeing a display mannequin in a lingerie shop window, a lingering interest in the aforementioned TV programs. But after my separation from my wife and joining the forum my interest and feelings were aroused significantly from both a sexual and surrogate companion perspective.

B: I bought my RealDoll without knowing if I was attracted to dolls or not. When she arrived I was immediately convinced of my attraction, but I must admit that when buying her, I was 40 and ready to lose \$6,500 if the experiment was negative.

C: Late 20s or early 30s when I saw the realistic silicone dolls. Avarice. Lust.

D: I was into building models as a child ... and coming from a family of engineers, detail was of high importance to me. After looking on the Internet I came across Realdoll.com and looking through the photo galleries I was taken by just how realistic they could be made to look. So real in fact that most people I showed the pictures I copied couldn't tell they were not real people. This is what attracted me to them at first. The thought of being able to pose a doll and fool others that it was a real person was a driving factor for me. The idea grew to going through with the purchase and getting a doll of my own, and looking at all the pictures of other dolls. Guess we tend to play with the idea of putting ourselves in the picture, putting ourselves in the situation depicted, be it romantic or mundane. My doll is a representation of what I find attractive, and, yes, I am attracted to her because of what she represents, not because of what she is made from. I am attracted to role playing with my doll as much as the feelings she invokes.

E: I was 24. I thought they were very interesting and they evoked the artist side of me.

3. How do you feel about love dolls now? Have your feelings toward them evolved over time?

A: They play an important role in my life, indeed a vital role, because without them I would be a very lonely old man with suicidal tendencies. My feelings have evolved to the level which could be closely equated with the human feeling of "Love," particularly caring and consideration, as well as sexual attraction.

B: At the beginning, the arrival of my doll started a state of mind near to a true love for her (but I knew it was not), and deep wish to share this love with all the doll lovers' community. My love for my doll became a deep affection for her, and since I am aware that the reasons to own a love doll are numerous, I share some of them.

C: Positive. Nope.

D: If you're referring by the question to her as a purely sex doll then I can't answer that as such, but if, like me, you look at them as a house companion, art, photographic muse, model ... then I can answer. I love them for what they can do, what we as people can do with them to explore our creativity and humor, for want of a better expression ... a vent for our "self-expression." Over time, the year I have had my girl, my feelings have changed. My concern for her wellbeing came firstly from looking after her as an asset (another behavior from the way I was brought up) but then as time went on I find I have become used to her company at home. She has become a part of my routine. I find I am including her in the activities I do at home. She has manifest herself as a person and I feel toward her as such.

E: I have grown into a collector of love dolls now.

4. How many dolls do you own?

A: Three. One RealDoll, one LovableDoll and one TeddyBabe. Each has a slightly different role in my life.

B: One.

C: Five. Two silicone (Ruby13 and LifeDoll), two plush (Teddy-Babes), one foamie (Harumi).

D: I own or as I tend to joke "am owned" by one doll at this time but will get a few more in the next few years.

E: Thirteen dolls.

5. Is your relationship with your doll(s) purely physical, or does it go beyond that? What does your doll bring to the relationship?

A: No, it goes beyond, however, there is a sexual side to our relationships. Tina TB is a sweet, soft cuddly doll. She shares my bed as a cuddle companion and nearly always sleeps with me. Natasha RD (Tash) is a beautiful, sultry and sexy doll with a serious, passionate and giving nature. She is very high maintenance and very difficult to handle and manage but is my main sexual partner. The detailed and considerable repair required to keep her functional has brought us closer together. Yvonne LD (Nony) is a doll with a carefree spirit, a beautiful body and a loving, caring nature. She also requires repair and maintenance but is easy to handle and manage. She has become my main photographic model. They all provide companionship in their own way as well as sexual release from time to time. In short they keep me busy — a hobby with benefits.

B: It's absolutely beyond that. It's 30 percent physical, 70 percent emotional. My doll brings to me a physical presence, but mainly a gathering place for the love and tenderness I need to express. She is an alibi/reason to live some social interactions, like buying clothes for her, speaking with another doll's owner...

C: It is purely physical. I view them as beautiful masturbation devices/sexual surrogates. I am in a long-term relationship with a wonderful woman, but her libido is much lower than mine. Dolls are a relief valve that helps me avoid compromising the relationship. I have never looked to my dolls for more than relief of sexual tension. Looks.

D: My relationship is not just physical, far from it. Mine is more an emotional one. I find she is a catalyst to bring out and inspire feelings I want to feel that I either don't get from others or don't get to feel as often as I would like. In my situation I deal with people most of the day in work situations and do like my own time as I get so little of it. So quiet time alone with someone who likes what I like to watch or do is rare. I can have these same feelings from her because of her presence and her tactile feel as we sit together and I cuddle with her. I guess with the human drive for companionship we find our own way to deal with not having a real person around. This is manifest of the human coping skill to deal with situations outside the physical norm.

E: My relationship with my dolls is like that of a girl to a friend. I am not bi nor am I gay or even really attracted to women. I simply love

them for photography and art. My boyfriend is the one who uses them physically. If I do use them at all, it is with him.

6. Do you name your doll(s) yourself, or keep the name they were given by their maker? What influences you in choosing a name?

A: Yes, I name them. The names go with their personalities. It came as a surprise to me that they each have their own personalities and character which is distinct, separate and different to any preconceived ideas I had about them before they arrived.

B: I choose her name. But I was embarrassed and found the name only when she's arrived. I started to talk to her saying, how is she? So I named her "She," but this word is "Elle" in French and is a true first name in some countries.

C: I keep the manufacturer names. I probably wouldn't bother with names except they want them in the [forum] album.

D: In the case of my doll Kaori, I kept the name she had by her maker because next to nobody used that name, and I found the name itself suited her and very attractive in its own right. What influences a name for your doll would depend on the personality you wish to impart to her. We all associate names to different characters and personality types because of what we are exposed to and our own experiences. Also personal choice, we all find different names appealing for our own reasons.

E: I name all my dolls. It gives them a personality that reflects on the camera and makes the photos seem more lifelike. I choose names that fit the doll's looks.

7. Are you aware of the long history of love dolls?

A: No. I have no knowledge of the history of love dolls other than what I have picked up from the forum.

B: Yes, because I've read the book of Elisabeth Alexandre and she wrote a lot about the love doll's history.

C: Parts of it, but I'm no expert.

D: I found out about them in my pre-teens. I used to read a lot. Then, like information that has no meaning to you beyond the rare and curious, I forgot it mostly till I came across the subject years later.

E: Yes, I would say so.

8. Were you a love doll user before the dolls went high-tech in 1996?

A: No. However after my separation (2007) and before investing

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\$10,000 in a high end doll, I bought a good quality and quite pretty inflatable doll for \$200 to test the principle to see if such an idea of a doll for sex and companionship would work. I was pleasantly surprised. Hence I went ahead and ordered my first high end doll.

B: Absolutely no. Not a user, not an admirer.

C: No.

D: No. Until 4–5 years ago I had no interest at all until I did some searching on another unrelated subject and came across the RealDolls and the forum and its galleries.

E: No.

9. When did you first become aware that there were other people who shared your interest in love dolls?

A: After my separation, alone and depressed, I remembered the TV documentaries. Wondering if such was a possibility and alternative for me, I went searching and found the forum (late 2007). Everything went on from there.

B: When discovering TDF (the doll forum).

C: When I saw realistic silicone dolls on TV.

D: You can refer to above answers to answer this question.

E: Shortly before purchasing my male RealDoll, I found the forum

10. Does it empower you to know that others share your interest?

A: Partly. They provide ideas, some inspiration and help. It has been useful to receive and give help and advice regarding all aspects of doll ownership. However my lack of ability to match their (apparent) skills in photography, innovation, computer literacy, commentary, sexual prowess and repair and maintenance can be quite depressing.

B: Sure. But after being more involved with the doll lovers' community, I learned that the motivations to own a doll are numerous and I don't share all of them.

C: No. But it does provide some interesting reading, beautiful photos, and valuable information.

D: Well as in all things we do, it is nice to know we are not the only ones, but I found it astounding that it is as widespread as it is. I am kind of expecting a kind of social revolution or renaissance to take place in the coming years since the numbers seem so high.

E: It gives me an audience to share my photos, so I would say so.

11. With regard to the increasing sophistication of love dolls, would you like your doll(s) to be able to talk, even if the words were pre-chosen?

A: No. We communicate through feelings. Again it is surprising but their moods do change from time to time. Perhaps a reflection of my needs, though not consciously. Thus it becomes their mood, their personality and their character. Pre-recorded talking or messages would destroy the illusion (if indeed it is just an illusion).

B: That's not essential for me, what a doll brings to me is instinctive: cuddling a body, kissing a face and sometimes more. Having a relationship, even artificial. Other features are optional. I am with my doll as I would be with a real girl. She is paralysed, OK, no matter, I love her. She don't speak, OK, no matter, I love her as she is. This is not like a computer or a car, without emotional link.

C: No. I am a visual person. I want them to look and feel like a woman. I don't need them to talk.

D: I would love her to be able to move on her own, and to talk would be very interesting. Having the words pre-chosen would be of little use as I see it.

E: No, I would find it disturbing for my dolls to be able to talk. My boyfriend agrees.

12. In terms of animation and robotics, would you like your doll(s) to be able to move by herself?

A: Yes. They are very heavy and difficult to handle (except Tina bless her heart). So it would make things much easier.

B: If I were a new buyer or if my doll was broken without a possible repair, I would buy the most realistic doll on the market (speaking features, animation, sensors), if my money allows it, of course.

C: Yes. It would be nice if they could help transport and position themselves (they can be rather heavy), and if they could move appropriately during use.

D: Yes, I look forward to the day this can happen.

E: Again no. To us a doll is a life size sex toy. We don't want her to be too lifelike or she will become more than that. We don't want that.

13. Would you like to see technology evolve love dolls into a kind of android/gynoid, a robot that could walk and talk and perform tasks?

A: Yes. Having three keeps one busy, almost too busy, with hair care,

dressing (and undressing) most if not every day, washing, talcing, moving, posing, repair, etc. Not much time for housework (and gardening), which I would love them to help me with.

B: Yes of course but for my next life. The more a doll is realistic the more she can shower her owner with joy. Matt McMullen, creator of Real-Dolls, said that such a doll would cost one million dollars!

C: No. It is best to keep those separate. Multi-function tools are nice. They do a lot of jobs OK, but I want my doll to perform one job spectacularly.

D: Again, yes, very much so.... I suppose the first thought that comes into the heads of most is they can do domestic tasks at home while you are at work, kind of like a, dare I say it, reversion back to slavery or a reimposition of gender-biased servitude. I guess how we as a species rationalize how to release ourselves from our workload so we have more time to relax, play and recreate will dictate such an introduction of roles.

E: I would say so. I personally would not buy one, but I know others would love them, and hopefully non-robotic dolls will still be an option.

14. In his recent book *Love + Sex with Robots*, David Levy, an expert in artificial intelligence, predicts that human beings will be falling in love with and marrying robots by the year 2050. How do you feel about this? Do you think he is right?

A: Unless the population of humans is both significantly reduced and subsequently controlled there will be no 2050, at least as a progression of what we know as life today. Perhaps robots in the form of male and female dolls without reproductive capability can provide part of the solution of satisfying our sexual urge without increasing the population whilst at the same time sustaining the workforce to “look after” us. It is unlikely though that sufficient numbers can be produced or afforded by the majority of the world’s population.

B: Maybe he is right about the 2050 technology but I’m sure he is wrong about the hypothesis that a man could fall in love with a robot. I think we can only fall in love with a real woman. With a robot it would just be a personal and mental feigning. And marrying robots by 2050 seems too soon.

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C: Bad idea. Any society that fails to encourage men and women to form families and procreate is doomed to die.

D: I haven't read the book as yet but I can guess at its conclusions, based on how humans react to change in ideas that challenge standing concepts and their roles.

E: I think it is sad to hear that will happen, but I also think it will happen. People are already falling in love with their dolls, and some have married them, which is something I strongly disagree with. However, a love for a doll like that of a love for your car is something I would understand.

15. There is a tradition in horror and science fiction literature of dolls which come to life and commit evil acts. Do you ever fantasize about your doll(s) coming to life and does this evoke positive or negative feelings in you?

A. No. In simple terms I do not love myself thus it would not be reasonable for me to expect such young and beautiful creatures to love me either. There is no evil in them. I love them and they keep me alive, that is sufficient.

B: If my doll comes to life and acts as a real woman, it would be the same relationship as with a real woman. So no, I don't fantasize about it and I like my doll because she is just a doll and only that. Maybe a doll brings to me what I appreciate a lot in a woman: beauty, sensuality, curves ... I could be interested in new features going in the same directions but not in features recreating some difficulties we have with real girls.

C: No.

D: Well I have had several dreams of my doll coming to life or meeting her as a real person and the interactions evolving from that. All my thoughts and dreams have been positive as I guess I have that mindset. I find the sci-fi depictions of dolls coming to life and any evil acts as nothing more than a mirror of human behavior to change or anything that is found different to the status quo. I am a big sci-fi fan myself so the idea of dolls walking, talking and interacting with us comes as no surprise. I have found the movies to date involving such concepts to be a negative reaction of mankind for various reasons.

E: Well, if 13 lifesize, lifelike dolls woke you up in the middle of the night, you may be a little terrified!

Loners

Some evidence suggests that the verisimilitude of the high-end sex doll is leading to a broader appeal of these objects as works of art, in addition to their primary function as sexual surrogates. On a psychological level, they can also evoke feelings of comfort and quiet companionship. However, the most striking feature among some doll users is the tendency to anthropomorphize their dolls, and to confer a semblance of personality upon them. This can be seen as a method of combating loneliness, but it is also a testimony to the growing realism of the high-end dolls. The sex doll offers a sexual and emotional outlet for a man who, for whatever reason, is unable to engage in regular sex with a woman. A man living in isolation where no women are present might choose a sex doll for companionship. An older man who is widowed could get a sex doll because it might be easier than starting over and building another relationship. People with a physical or psychological disability may find a sex doll provides a useful and beneficial outlet for their sexual desires. Prostitutes provide a similar service, but a man who lacks the self-confidence to approach a woman in a normal social setting might feel uncomfortable negotiating with a woman for paid sex. For the introvert, a sex doll provides a good anatomical representation of a woman for intercourse without the usual prerequisites of social interaction, and without the possibility of rejection. The fear of rejection is significant, especially for the man who is socially awkward. For him, a sex doll can provide the perfect outlet for his sexual needs.

This type of behavior was first recognized by American academic Sherry Turkle in her seminal 1984 book *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*, which analyzed the impact of computers on society. Turkle recognized the tendency among heavy computer users to develop strong relationships with their machines in preference to interaction with other human beings. These early computer users appreciated the safety, security and level of control they were able to exert over the relationship with their machines.³ With a sex doll or a machine the matter of mutual sexual attraction is no longer relevant, because the partner does not have to give consent. Hence the user can be physically unappealing or suffer from an incurable sexual disease, and still hold no fear of rejection or ridicule. We should not underestimate the fear of sexual inadequacy in

men. Sex with an artificial partner totally removes this fear, and is therefore very empowering. This is particularly relevant now that women have experienced several decades of sexual freedom and experimentation. As Naomi Wolf tactfully put it: "With women experimenting sexually, men risked hearing what women hear every day: that there are sexual standards against which they might be compared. Their fears are exaggerated: Even with sexual freedom, women maintain a strict code of etiquette. 'Never,' enjoins a women's magazine, 'mention the size of his [penis] in public....'"⁴

With this fear of female sexuality, what some men ultimately desire is the totally sexless woman, the woman who has had her sexual essence completely removed. Rachel Maines alluded to this in the preface to her book on vibrators and the female orgasm, *The Technology of Orgasm*. "...My research confirms that women are as sexual as [some men] had always hoped, [and as sexual as other men] had always feared."⁵ The threat of rejection or of unflattering comparison is removed, but with it goes the very femininity of the woman. There is no better example of this than the sex doll. Cohabitation with a sex doll allows the user to avoid some of the pitfalls of a normal sexual relationship, in particular the bitter experience of rejection. Users avoid developing sexual hang-ups. In some way using a sex doll may allay their inherent fear of the sex act. At the same time, using a sex doll frees the user from having to provide any pleasure or stimulation to another person.

The Female Orgasm

The mystery of the female orgasm has long been a point of concern for men. In *The Technology of Orgasm*, Maines illustrates how medicine and psychoanalysis subsumed female sexuality under a disease umbrella until very recent times, labeling it with terms such as "hysteria." Research suggests that the association of female sexual needs and medical disorders persisted from around the fourth century B.C. until the American Psychiatric Association dropped the term "hysteria" in 1952.⁶ The patriarchy of the Victorian era was particularly terrified of female sexuality and sought to suppress it at every turn. In the British television series *Sin City*, Richard Davenport-Hines spoke of the patronizing and contemptuous attitude of Victorian doctors toward their female patients. These men would invariably

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sedate spirited female patients heavily with morphine or other opiates to make them “less troublesome at home and better, more compliant wives and daughters.”⁷

The pornographic film industry tried unsuccessfully to capture and portray the female orgasm. However, the female climax is noted for its sheer lack of visibility. Obviously, the attempt to market images of female ejaculation runs into problems. Those who try are attempting to align the female orgasm with the ejaculation of the male. What may be most troubling to the masculine ego is that many women do not achieve sexual climax via penetration. The clitoris presents in such a position in relation to the vagina that some form of manual or external stimulation can help a woman to reach orgasm. The partner may provide it or artificial implements such as a dildo or other sex aids may be used. One cannot emphasize forcefully enough the threat to men posed by the vibrator, at least until recent times. Rachel Maines recalls encountering stiff opposition from older academics when presenting her research on vibrators: “I have since encountered this objection in many forms, of which the most straightforward ... was the complaint, ‘But if what you’re saying is true, then women don’t need men!’ The only possible reply is that if orgasm is the only issue, men don’t need women either.”⁸

Maines’s simple response gets to the crux of the matter. Men place central importance on the orgasm as the be-all and end-all of sex. In doing so, men can lose touch with the notion of intimacy and the sharing of mutual pleasure. This is a consideration in a relationship with sex dolls. If sexual intimacy were nothing more than achieving sexual release via orgasm, then both sexes could hypothetically remain autonomous and masturbate.

What is fascinating is the level of discussion and debate this issue has caused over the centuries, as men desperately attempted to reconcile female sexual pleasure to the masculine ideal of penetration and male orgasm. For a long time there was a widespread fear of women touching themselves intimately and of allowing their sexual desires to so overwhelm them that they might be inclined to flaunt themselves provocatively before men. It is obvious that the notion of female sexual pleasure has long been a source of great stress and concern to the masculine ego. It would seem that the overriding fear was that if women learned to pleasure themselves, they might begin to need men less.

Men's fears were no doubt enhanced as people began to share information about women's sexual experience. Alfred Kinsey's famous study on sexuality, for example, must have set a few hearts racing when it reported that 45 percent of female masturbators reached orgasm in less than three minutes.⁹ For society, the blooming of female sexuality threatened the male ego and the nuclear family. Women's sexual pleasure was not mentioned in popular culture until quite recent times. The feminist pornographer Lisa Palac alludes to this in her autobiography, *The Edge of the Bed*. "Despite all the sex clues hidden in pop culture, I came across absolutely nothing about female masturbation. Led Zeppelin sure wasn't singing about the clitoris, and there was no episode of *The Brady Bunch* where Marcia finds her clit and comes. Even in the sex magazines I saw, women just spread their legs, they didn't touch, and it gave me the impression that just spreading would result in a deep state of ecstasy."¹⁰

For some men the ideal sex and life partner is a woman who is completely silent and obedient, with whom he does not need to share, listen or communicate. He not only desires to silence the female voice but he also wants to avoid the most difficult, time-consuming, frustrating and sometimes humiliating experience of all, trying to give his partner an orgasm. The vagina, at the core of female sexuality, is simultaneously desired and feared by men. By removing the necessity of stimulation, both emotional and physical, from the sex act, a man frees himself of obligation to a female partner and the inherent pressure to perform. In this regard, it is ironic that we live in an age when women are just beginning to achieve real equality, and at the same time new technology is producing better gynoids. Just as women begin to ask, "What about my orgasm?" some men are trying to remove them from the sexual picture altogether.

Vagina Dentata

Most people associate the term vagina dentata with Freudian psychoanalysis. Indeed, Freud brought the concept into the public consciousness in the Victorian era. It describes an allegedly intrinsic masculine fear of female sexuality and the female sex organ, literally that the female sex organs might somehow become a set of fangs that would devour the unsuspecting male member. For Freud the term vagina dentata embodied a uni-

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versal castration fear. It implies a fear of the unknown for a timid or virginal man, a fear of inadequacy and ridicule should he not perform to expectations, and maybe a fear of sexual disease, or of the vagina itself, which is largely internal and therefore mysterious like a cave. These fears were understandable in the Victorian era, where sex was obfuscated and most young people were kept in the dark about it. This lack of sexual education led to feelings of shame, guilt, trauma and neurosis arising from the thought of sex. All of this helped the new science of psychoanalysis to thrive.

However, vagina dentata is in fact quite ancient and universal. References to it are found in the literature of Egypt, Indo-Europe, Greece, and early America. It derives from a primitive masculine fear of women and sexual union. It encompasses the fear of male weakness and post-coital loss of strength. It is implied in the Biblical tale of Samson and Delilah. In the Middle Ages some Christians believed that witches could grow fangs in their vaginas. The early Jews referred to the vagina as *beth shenayim*, “the toothed place,” and stressed the importance of vigilance before entry. Medieval Christians sometimes equated women’s genitals with the “yawning mouth of Hell.”¹¹ The feminist writer Elizabeth Grosz says:

The fantasy of the vagina dentata, of the non-human status of woman as android, vampire or animal, the identification of female sexuality as voracious, insatiable, enigmatic, invisible and unknowable, cold, calculating, instrumental, castrator/decapitator of the male ... are all consequences of ways in which the male orgasm has functioned as the measure and representative of all sexualities and all modes of erotic encounter.¹²

While we no longer live in the sexual dark ages, some men miss out on the normal socializing events of early manhood and find themselves lacking the confidence to engage in social intercourse that can lead to sexual intercourse. Taking all this into consideration, it is perhaps understandable why some men would avoid normal sexual interaction and the imagined fear of emasculation via rejection. The unknown can be terrifying and mysterious.

Women as Objects of Conquest

All of the masculine fears can be avoided by having sex with sex dolls, gynoids, or other non-responding sexual partners. In every instance, where

the fear is of rejection, inadequacy, disease, lack of fidelity, pregnancy, lack of time or the cost of maintaining a relationship, control is the unifying theme. A relationship with a sex doll allows the user to maintain complete control of the situation. Control in a sexual context is neatly aligned with the concept of masculine power and domination. Dominion over a sexual partner is achieved by avoiding social and sexual intercourse with a real woman altogether. This kind of denial simultaneously creates a powerful erotic charge associated with forbidden pleasure. An object that causes fear, in this case the vagina or female sexual desire, can bring about a powerful urge to conquer it. A man who feels powerless before women and their sexual needs can use his physical strength to overpower them and take control of what he desires. Some men prefer restrained, silenced and submissive sexual partners.

As we delve further into the realm of fetish, we begin to encounter some of the more deviant paraphilia focused on the non-responding partner, including those so deviant as to be illegal, such as rape, sexual murder and necrophilia. These are perhaps more widely known as sexual taboos. Their common ground is that they all involve violence, which man has striven to remove from his behavior in order to civilize himself. Yet despite the cultural stigmata attached to certain taboo sexual acts, some are drawn toward them, even though they provoke inner turmoil. While the perpetrators usually know what they are doing is wrong and are aware of the possible consequences of their actions, they are nevertheless drawn to these acts by the very stimulation caused by the breaking of the taboo. The French theorist Georges Bataille says: "The inner experience of eroticism demands from the subject a sensitiveness to the anguish at the heart of the taboo no less great than the desire which leads him to infringe it. This is religious sensibility, and it always links desire closely with terror, intense pleasure and anguish."¹³ Thus, part of the attraction to such practices is the erotic stimulation afforded by the violation of socially imposed boundaries. What the sexual criminal has in common with those who have sex with sex dolls is the subliminal desire for complete control of the sexual partner. Indeed some men seem to view women as a different species, or as enemy territory they have to conquer, rather than as friends and equals.

Nine

THE DARK SIDE OF DESIRE

*That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her.*

— Robert Browning, “Porphyria’s Lover”

Sex is often linked with violence and the ultimate transgression is sexual murder, usually perpetrated by men against women to assert their power. The result is a corpse which can no longer resist, which can be violated further if necessary to reinforce the domination of the perpetrator. Brenda Love has suggested that the sex doll may be useful for the type of man with unusual sexual desires.¹ The Pygmalionist can only experience sexual release with a non-responding sexual partner. There are a number of reasons why. Predominant among them is the fear of rejection, coupled with an overwhelming desire to take control. These two elements are not as incongruous as they appear. As we have discovered, non-responding types can range from a sleeping body, to a restrained body, a statue, a mannequin, a gynoid, a sex doll, or even a corpse. Desire for any of these involves to some extent the desire to control the sexual partner, to impose some sort of restraint on the movement and will of the other. Once an individual becomes conditioned to a submissive, silent or restrained partner, he will attempt to repeat the experience. Moreover, he will also likely find himself unable to respond in a normal sexual situation.

Psychologists know that some men demand total submission from their sexual partner. They expect adoration and unerring faith, yet are not prepared to give the same in return. This type of man was first described by the science fiction writer A.E. Van Vogt in a pamphlet released in 1954 titled “A Report on the Violent Male.” He became interested in violent men because of an increase in divorce cases garnering public attention at the time.² Van Vogt noticed chauvinism in male behavior patterns, in par-

ticular, the tendency to have one code of conduct for their partner and another for themselves. He called his subject “the right man” (sometimes known as the “violent man”) because this type cannot admit he is wrong. Indeed, any resistance to his dominance is usually met with extreme violence. These men stalk, abuse and sometimes even kill women who put an end to the relationship. It is a classic behavior pattern and most of us are familiar with this type of possessive love. Many men feel it. Georges Bataille was aware of it: “Possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but the idea of death is linked with the urge to possess. If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her. Or else he may wish to die himself.”³

Only the most masochistic women or those with very low self-esteem would subject themselves to this sort of treatment. A man with enough capital can afford to pay a woman to behave in a subservient manner, but even a prostitute can only be bought for a limited amount of time, while a mistress always presents the threat of betrayal, having a mind and will of her own.

It would be wrong to suggest that an aggressive, sexually violent male and a man who enjoys sex dolls are necessarily alike. The violent man desperately seeks a response to his violence in order to validate his existence. The Pygmalionist, conversely, seeks only quiet companionship. In some ways he is subservient to the doll and its “needs,” and ultimately the actions of the Pygmalionist are physically harmless. However, what both types do have in common is that central desire to establish total and complete control of the relationship. This is a consistent theme among many deviant stereotypes — the spouse beater, the violent lover, the philanderer, the kerb crawler, the rapist, the sex killer, the necrophile, and the Pygmalionist. The comments posted by sex doll users on their many websites do indicate a wide range of personality types, some with violent tendencies toward their dolls. In an article on the website Salon.com posted in April 2008, Meghan Laslocky mentions some of the cases reported by “Fiero,” the official RealDoll doctor: “Some of Fiero’s stories are the stuff of horror films. He once got an e-mail from two garbage collectors who found a RealDoll hacked to pieces in a dumpster. One owner sent Fiero a mutilated corpse of a doll.... Another time, an Asian undergraduate student at a university in California dropped his 1-year-old doll off for repairs.... ‘I was offended

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in so many ways,' he continues. 'He put her feet behind her head and reamed that doll with whatever cock he's got. He fucked her violently. She was achieving positions she shouldn't achieve or be forced to try. Her vagina and anus were a giant gaping hole.' ... Fiero says he'll never again make repairs for the student, who he now refers to as JTR—Jack the Ripper."⁴

Laslocky goes on to tell how Matt MacMullan of RealDoll receives regular requests from potential clients wanting dolls that urinate or lactate, or that are amputees or children. This seems to suggest that the dolls do attract men with unusual tastes. The lack of resistance, malleability and naturally submissive state of the doll must be drawing points. Perhaps it is reassuring that some men express their violence toward sex dolls instead of real women, although they may be only using the dolls for practice. In this regard we must consider the torsos and body parts offered by some companies as symbolic of the realm of the serial killer.

Sex Crimes

The psychologist Abraham Maslow posited that human beings are intrinsically good, or at least morally neutral. The tendency toward evil or criminal behavior is an experiential result of a frustration of the individual's true will. Maslow asserted that humans are capable of pursuing the noblest of intentions, and that to do so is quite natural to the species and part of our personal development. He referred to the process as "self-actualization."⁵ Maslow noted that sex becomes a way of exhibiting dominance. The social anthropologist Robert Ardrey stated that sex assumes an exaggerated importance in captivity. Most countries record a statistical rise in the number of sex crimes as cities become more densely populated. The philosopher George Gurdjieff suggested that the problem with human consciousness was that we too easily become passive and cease to make the effort of will to think.⁶ This type of mental laziness can extend into physical laziness, which in turn can make us not only physically ill, but also mentally ill.

In his text *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud said that man's most basic impulses are aggressive, and therefore civilization is bound to be full of unhappy neurotics. "If civilisation becomes too peaceful, it will explode from within like a bomb." We can see the value of war in pre-technological societies as a means of channeling masculine aggression. We

can also appreciate that the descent into torpor brings with it a desire to strike out angrily to bring about change. Violence results from an individual or social inability to apply the necessary thought processes to the cause of the problem. There are many ways to bring about change. Violence is the easiest and most primitive response.

Marshall McLuhan drew an interesting parallel between sex and death in his book *The Mechanical Bride*, in which he discusses how sexual boredom can lead to a desire for danger, to re-awaken and heighten the senses:

Sensation and sadism are near twins. And for those for whom the sex act has come to seem mechanical and merely the meeting and manipulation of body parts, there often remains a hunger which can be called metaphysical but which is not recognized as such, and which seeks satisfaction in physical danger, or sometimes in torture, suicide or murder.⁷

Hence sexual aberrations are an attempt to recreate the sense of being truly alert and alive, as we are in coitus with a new partner. As Colin Wilson puts it, sex crimes represent an attempt to rejuvenate an event which has become dull and commonplace.⁸ Georges Bataille also alludes to the intrinsic parallel between sex and death in the nature of man:

Man has built up the rational world by his own efforts, but there remains within him an undercurrent of violence. Nature herself is violent, and however reasonable we may grow we may be mastered anew by a violence no longer that of nature but that of a rational being who tries to obey but who succumbs to stirrings within himself which he cannot bring to heel.⁹

The driving force behind sexual crime is a desire to exert or re-establish control over one's life. The forced submission of others to the will of the criminal perpetrator brings the perpetrator the sense of power and importance he craves. Rapists, sex killers and necrophiles all have a subliminal connection to Pygmalionism. They all have a similar drive to establish total control over others, and by doing so, to take control over their own lives. These deviants desire to force others to submit to their will.

Rape

Rape is centered in the overwhelming need of the perpetrator to establish forceful control over the victim, against the victim's will. Criminologists assert that rape is about power rather than sex. The thrill comes from the sense of godlike power attained by the perpetrator through forcing

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another to submit to his physical response. In consequence, the excitement of the rapist must in some part stem from the submission of the victim. In other words, the feeling of triumph results from the non-resistance or the spirited-but-futile resistance of the other to the act of force. The normal male socializing process is a contributing factor to rape. Men are encouraged to compete on so many levels. They feel an expectation to prove their manhood via sexual performance and this can lead to aggressive behavior and possible frustration. Feelings like these can lead to sexual assault.

Rape is one way a man may attempt to assert control and domination over a woman. Colin Wilson has theorized that the compulsion that drives men to rape may well be a kind of subverted worship of women. In his infant state, a boy worships his mother as a kind of goddess. But as he matures, his growing awareness of her sexuality comes as a shock, and he begins to ask himself how this goddess can give herself to other men to satisfy their sexual urges. For the potential rapist, even his own sexual maturity does not make these illogical feelings dissipate. As Wilson says: "The romantic craving for the 'eternally womanly' can turn sour and violent. The fact that these infinitely desirable creatures can offer themselves like tarts touches some nerve of morbid, masochistic pleasure, which incubates jealousy and violence."¹⁰

As he grows, this type of man will transfer his feelings of innate jealousy to any woman he desires who gives her affection to another man. Thus the rapist sets out to punish all women for what he perceives as their sexual indiscretion. Some rapists see not a real woman, but a convenient fantasy object. As a result, the rapist rarely accepts the blame for his actions. Rather, he will look for an excuse. Pornographic images are often the excuse, as is the sexuality of the victim herself. In his book *Men on Rape*, Tim Beneke spoke of the tendency among men who rape to blame the victim for the assault:

The view that it is natural for men to rape is closely connected to the view of women as commodities. If a woman's body is regarded as a valued commodity by men, then of course, if you leave a valued commodity where it can be taken, it's just human nature for men to take it.... If a woman walks the streets at night, she's leaving a valued commodity, her body, where it can be taken. So long as women are regarded as commodities, they will be blamed for rape.¹¹

Naomi Wolf also linked certain female body parts, fetishism and sex crime:

THE SEX DOLL

The parts of the body vary. But what each woman who describes it shares is the conviction that *that* is what the pornography of beauty most fetishizes. Breasts, thighs, buttocks, bellies; the most sexually central parts of women, whose “ugliness” therefore becomes an obsession. Those are the parts most often battered by abusive men. The parts that sex murderers most often mutilate. The parts most often defiled by violent pornography. The parts that beauty surgeons most often cut open. The parts that bear and nurse children and feel sexual.¹²

In some instances murder follows the act of rape. This can result from an escalation in sexual violence as the offender enjoys the fear of the victim. The power, anger, humiliation, degradation and lust involved in the act of rape push the rapist to greater transgression. Many serial killers are rapists who have graduated to a higher level of violence.

Sex Killers

Psychologists argue that there is a link between the desire for sex and the urge to kill. Few will commit a lust murder, but the theory implies that we are all susceptible to the desire. Apparently, most of us have the ability to suppress the desires. Yet for a few it can become an obsession, and thereby, a natural progression, as Georges Bataille suggests:

Not all of us feel it, but who would go as far as to deny that it has as lively, if not as exacting, an existence among the masses as sexual appetite? There is a potential killer in every man; the frequency of senseless massacres throughout history makes that much plain. The desire to kill relates to the taboo on murder in just the same way as does the desire for sexual activity to the complex of prohibitions limiting it.¹³

Some will always be unable to suppress the urge to break society's taboos against sex and murder. It is remarkable how frequently the two come together, particularly in the case of sex killers. Sex killers suffer from an inability to relate to other human beings, as do all those who require a non-responding partner. The lust murderer, however, takes his frustration to the extreme. The majority of victims of serial killers are women, as are almost all victims of sex crimes. Sex killers tend to see women as dirty, unreliable and untrustworthy. The sex killer most often employs a knife or similar implement as a substitute for the phallus, which he uses to symbolically penetrate the victim. Sex killers desire to possess, and thereby

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control, the other person. Their perception of power and self-worth arises from the denial of the same in the victim. Indeed, they see the victim not as another human being, but as an object before them to bring them immediate gratification.

There is a subliminal link between the philanderer and the man who kills repeatedly. Both have an obsession with numbers, keeping a tally of their conquests. Stephen Heath, in his book *The Sexual Fix*, draws a link between Walter, the protagonist of *My Secret Life*, one of the earliest anonymous pornographic novels (1890), and his contemporary, Jack the Ripper:

Thus the compulsive cycle: encounter, act, verification; endlessly repeated, woman after woman. Thus the interminable doubt: the need to try every woman, all women, in order to have from them the certainty of the sex, the assurance of Woman, complete and enclosed, finally known and secured in that knowledge; medically, psychologically ... (at the end of Walter, a few years later, is Jack the Ripper, the Whitechapel murderer, dissecting his prostitute victims, removing vagina and womb with all the professional skill of ... a medical man).¹⁴

Another thing the rapist, sex killer and Pygmalionist have in common is the need to objectify the victim. Writing on the subject of lust in a series on the seven deadly sins, Simon Blackburn says: "From this first step towards objectification, they [the type of man who objectifies women] tend to slip fast into a pessimistic view of sex that regards all of its more or less distant objects as dehumanised and degraded."¹⁵

It is easier to commit an act of aggression when the victim is reduced to an object. This is similar to the kind of dehumanizing of the enemy that soldiers undertake during conflict. It is a kind of defense mechanism which allows the aggressor to justify an act of atrocity on another human being. The American serial killer Leonard Lake, who kidnapped, raped, tortured and murdered several women in California in the mid 1980s, is quoted as saying: "The perfect woman is totally controlled. A woman who does exactly what she is told and nothing else. There is no sexual problem with a submissive woman. There are no frustrations, only pleasure and contentment."¹⁶ Gerald Gallego, who operated in the same area in the late 1970s and early 1980s, expressed similar sentiments. Aided by his de facto "wife," Charlene Williams, Gallego abducted, raped and murdered several young women with the intention of finding "the perfect sex slave."¹⁷ A similar kind of objectification is evidenced by early 1970s Oregon killer Jerome Brudos:

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Brudos returned to the basement. She was still there, waiting for him. He undressed her, and then, treating her like a life sized doll, he dressed her with articles of clothing from his own secret collection.... Afterwards, he suspended her from a hook in the ceiling and attempted to reanimate the body with electric shocks. He attached wire leads to a pair of hypodermic needles and inserted them in her ribcage.¹⁸

The mindset of the sex killer is the most extreme example of the kind of thinking exhibited by persons who desire absolute control over a sex partner. Colin Wilson describes this sort of behavior as “a kind of ‘spoiltness’ that leads to a total inability to identify with other human beings.”¹⁹ Moreover, it may be said of sex killers that they personify the masculine desire to control life and death itself. There is something primal in their actions. Like a carnivorous animal, they stalk their prey before bringing it under their control and (inevitably) killing it. They embody the symbiotic link between sex and death. The Marquis de Sade once wrote, “There is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image.”²⁰ He refers to the innate link between thoughts or images of death and erotic stimulation. The connection between these two great human taboos is further emphasized by the unavoidably violent nature of the sex act itself. At its most passionate, the act symbolically encompasses the consumption of the sex partner.

There is also a connection between the sudden finality of sexual orgasm and the finality of death. The French sometimes refer to the sexual climax as *le petite mort* (the little death). Bataille also emphasizes the link: “What does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioners? — a violation bordering on death, bordering on murder? The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still.”²¹

The unfortunate result of this for the sex killer is that, even if he enjoys the sexual favors of the victim before or even after death, he cannot maintain his domination over dead flesh, for it will decay and rot. He is merely left with the memory of whatever pleasure the act of murder brought, and, if he remains unapprehended, a growing tally of bodies. To paraphrase Bataille again, the man who regards the corpse with awe sees in it an image of his own destiny.²² But the sex killer confuses sexual control with freedom. Leonard Lake would have us believe that the sex killer assumes he will achieve a sense of higher consciousness. But what he fails to appreciate is that this higher consciousness is usually achieved

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as a shared experience with another human being. Colin Wilson puts it eloquently:

Why is there no case on record of a serial killer achieving “higher consciousness” through sex? Why, in fact, do so many of them end with a curious sense of futility? The answer lies partly in the fact that man is essentially a social being, and that sex is an activity involving another person.... The freedom feeling involves a sense of expansion, of happiness and benevolence. In sex between lovers, this feeling finds its natural object in the other person. In violation, the act itself contradicts the sensation it arouses. Freedom is about the transcendence of the personality. By contrast, crime involves the entrapment of the personality.²³

In carrying out his purpose, the serial killer becomes a kind of artist. The body of the victim is his oeuvre, the murder scene his canvas. He in turn is subject to what de Sade describes as the monstrous denial of principle. In Sadeian terms, the degree of pleasure is in proportion to the destruction of life.

The aggression displayed by the sex killer in subduing and controlling his victim, is similar to that of someone who desires copulation or cohabitation with a submissive partner, whether that partner is drunk, unconscious, restrained, a corpse, or the symbolic embodiment of female sexuality contained in a sex doll. The English sex killer John Christie had to knock his victims out with gas before he could become sexually aroused enough to rape and kill them. In his book on good and evil, *The Evil That Men Do*, Brian Masters describes the danger inherent in repressed aggression: “Aggression is liable to turn into dangerous violence when it is repressed or disowned.... The man who is able to assert himself in a socially acceptable fashion is seldom vicious; it is the weak who are most likely to stab one in the back.”²⁴

Masters then draws attention to two serial-killing necrophiles, Jeffrey Dahmer and the above mentioned Christie, who, like so many others, resorted to murder when they found themselves unable to establish normal social or sexual relations with others. The necrophile is another type of deviant whose motivation is control.

Necrophilia

Some may wonder about the link between sex dolls and necrophilia. There are definite similarities between the marketing and visual presenta-

tion of the sex doll and the fresh corpse of a beautiful deceased woman. Both lack movement and life. The traditional inflatable sex doll bore no resemblance to a corpse. However, the manner in which they were marketed made them look like real women. Without reading between the lines of the advertisement, the unwitting purchaser could easily expect to receive something resembling an actual lifeless body in terms of weight, skin texture, and appearance. This was appealing to the uninitiated, in the days before sex shops made visual inspection of the product possible.

The anatomically precise, high-end sex dolls of the new millennium are even closer in appearance to a fresh corpse. These dolls lessen the symbolic distance between the technosexual and the necrophile. On a psychological level there is an even more significant link between the necrophile and the user of sex dolls. It is the need to have absolute and total control over an eternally silent, submissive and obedient sex partner. For the necrophile and sex killer, their victims are beautiful objects they want to preserve and keep forever. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the attraction to cohabitation with the dead may be linked to what Sigmund Freud termed "Thanatos," man's innate death-wish. Freud's theory suggests that as inanimate matter preceded the animate, the inanimate state is preferable, and it is our purpose to seek out the eternal peace of nothingness and the sanctity of the grave. This is just one of many psychological theories about necrophilia. Another possible theory is outlined by Freud's contemporary, Iwan Bloch, who suggests that the notion of non-resistance is key:

The idea of intercourse with a dead body, and also that of intercourse with an insensible human being, somewhat frequently gives rise to peculiar forms of sexual aberration. First of all in this connection we have to consider symbolic necrophilia, in which the person concerned contents himself with the simple appearance of death. A prostitute or some other woman must clothe herself in a shroud, lie in a coffin (or similar), and during the whole time must pretend to be dead, whilst the necrophilist satisfies himself sexually by various acts.²⁵

The term necrophilia is derived from the Greek word *nekros*, meaning dead body, and *philos*, an attraction to or love of. A necrophile has a morbid fascination with fondling corpses, or in simple terms, a desire to have sexual contact, but not necessarily sexual penetration, with the dead. The necrophile has inhibitions with live women, even if they are willing to

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meet his sexual needs. He is interested in the corpse because it is passive. The paraphilia is multifaceted and not all necrophiles are male. One of the few official studies undertaken on the subject was prepared in 1989 by two psychologists, Drs. Jonathon Rosman and Phillip Resnick. This study directed toward the psychology community was called, "Sexual Attraction to Corpses, a Psychiatric Review of Necrophilia."²⁶ Rosman and Resnick outlined three basic types of necrophiliac practice: necrophilia homicide, where murder is committed in order to obtain a corpse; regular necrophilia, the use of dead bodies for sexual pleasure; and necrophilia fantasy, the envisioning of the act of sexual intercourse with a corpse. Regular necrophilia is the most common. Most necrophiles are thought to work in death-related occupations, such as the funeral industry or in hospitals. This stands to reason and can be understood in crude terms of supply and demand. No information is available about the numbers of people in those professions who might practice necrophilia. Rosman and Resnick suggest that approximately 90 percent of necrophiles are male. One of the more famous and contemporary female necrophiles is Karen Greenlee, an American woman whose necrophiliac tendencies ran her afoul of American law in the late 1970s. Her case is detailed in Adam Parfrey's book, *Apocalypse Culture*.²⁷

By all accounts, necrophilia dates to the beginning of human history. G.L. Simons's *The Illustrated Book of Sexual Records* lists a number of famous historical and mythical cases. Herod was said to have cohabited with his wife Mariamne for seven years after her death. Charlemagne allegedly kept the remains of his German mistress. Queen Juana of Castile slept with her dead husband, Philip the Handsome, for three years after his death. The ancient Egyptians were well aware of the tendency toward necrophilia among their own embalmers and funeral attendants. They even passed a law requiring the family of the deceased to keep possession of the corpse for several days before burial preparation. Presumably, this would allow the process of decay to set in and dissuade any amorous necrophiles. In myth, the Egyptian goddess Isis was said to have conceived her son Horus after the murder of her lover Osiris by having his body cut to pieces and using his severed member as a dildo while reciting magical incantations. It is most likely that the ancients' interest in necrophilia sprang from death worship, which in turn would have arisen from a general fear of death and the afterlife, the great unknown. Some cultures practiced

necrophilia in an attempt to achieve a sort of spiritual connection with the deceased. One theory has it that certain tribes believed sex with a dead mate might revive him or her. The practice of necrophilia is even celebrated in some artefacts of ancient cultures. The creator of the necrophilia website *Rob's Fantasy* describes this:

The pottery of the Moche civilisation in Peru, active in the first seven centuries of our era, reflect a common scene of skeletal figures known as caranchas engaging in sexual acts with humans or among themselves, sometimes in orgies. The modern day Asmats of Irian Jaya place a human skull against the genitals for up to three days, the purpose being to absorb the sexual power of the skull's owner.²⁸

Along similar lines, some ancient cultures believed that a virgin could not enter the gates of paradise, hence the need for the officially sanctioned ritual deflowering of the corpse.

The connection between serial murder and necrophilia was first categorized by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing in his seminal text *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886. Continuing into the twentieth century many serial killers have also been necrophiliacs. Among these are Ed Gein, Denis Nilsen, Ed Kemper, Eric Cooke, Fred and Rose West, Henry Lee Lucas, Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy. But there are variations in the practice of necrophilia. A common motive given by psychologists for an attraction toward corpses is "the attempt to gain possession of an unresisting or non-rejecting partner."²⁹ Yet necrophiles have some obvious differences. Some merely fantasize about the dead. Some simply want to be near and touch dead bodies. Some desire full sexual penetration, and some want to humiliate and dominate the corpse. Serial killers are most likely to fall into the latter category, and some argue that serial killers are not true necrophiles. A prominent, presumably female necrophile, Leilah Wendell, has a presence on many necrophilia websites and is quite adamant in her definition: "A true necrophile has the highest, even a divine reverence for the dead, and an overwhelming respect for death itself."³⁰ Further, some necrophiles prefer a fresh corpse and others are interested in decay, or just bones.

Brian Masters has suggested that necrophilia can be explained as a form of depression. He refers specifically to the necrophile who maintains an attachment (usually a physical one) to the corpse of a loved one. According to Masters, "This is quite clearly a type of bereavement, a disinclination to be consoled, a desire to perpetuate a state of happiness which threatens

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to slip away because, alone, the mourner would be reduced to his own insubstantial personality and would not amount to much. Necrophilia, understood thus, is a kind of comfort.”³¹ Perhaps what the necrophile truly desires is to hold onto something transitory, the illusion of beauty. Thus the necrophile who kills wants to preserve the object of his/her desire in its perceived perfect state. He wants the other to be there for him permanently, eternally unchanging. This was the self-proclaimed logic behind the crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer. In his deluded passion, the necrophile killer suspends the reality that dead flesh rots, until the process of decomposition jolts him back to the real world.

Other paraphilias have a slight connection to necrophilia, such as somnophilia, the desire to engage in sex with a sleeping, drugged, drunk or unconscious partner. Obviously, the attraction here is for a non-resisting other, one who is so totally under control as to be non-responsive. Another loosely related deviance is plushophilia, the desire to engage in sexual acts with stuffed toys. Necrophilia is linked to fascination with “snuff” movies, which purport to show actual footage of unwilling victims being killed for the pleasure of the viewer. Also connected is linking the near-death experience to orgasm, as evidenced in acts of auto-erotic and mutual strangulation among individuals and couples. For those whose interest in necrophilia stops at the level of fantasy, at least one website is designed to meet their needs. [Www.necrobabes.com](http://www.necrobabes.com) features live models enacting death scenes in a number of stereotypical poses for erotic effect. In a similar vein, a contemporary porn film company (RPB Studios) makes fetish films in which living women pretend to be androids or sex dolls.

Domination

In each of these connected sexual paraphilias we can recognize a subliminal connection to sex doll users. To the casual observer, necrophilia, like sex with a doll, is not a true act of sexual intercourse, but rather an act of self-gratification with an inanimate object. The user of the sex doll, like the user of a corpse, exerts a domination over the inert body of the other. This is similar to the empowerment of the rapist and the sex killer, who subdues his victim and may abuse the corpse. The key element in

achieving sexual and emotional fulfillment in these taboo acts is gaining control. The perpetrator gains control of the self and of others for sexual gratification, but more importantly, gains control over death itself. Part of the fascination with taboo acts like necrophilia is that they represent a response to our universal fear of death. Thus we confront an issue that terrifies us and attempt to tame it by eroticizing it.

An element of selfishness is involved in partaking of these illegal pleasures. Defenders of necrophilia often claim that they don't hurt anyone, but surely they are hurting the grieving family of the deceased. More than this, such acts of self-indulgence suggest in the perpetrator a willful inability to communicate on an equal footing with another human being. In men, it hints at a problem with male response to female sexuality and the female orgasm. Men who indulge in a relationship with an artificial or deceased partner willingly allow themselves to stagnate in an arrested state of development. By refusing to take part in the social, sexual and emotional negotiation involved in a relationship between two living human beings, they willfully avoid the responsibilities involved. They try to remove the possibility of disappointment and conflict from their lives, but unwittingly they also remove the possibility of personal growth. They become inwardly focused because even the level of sexual satisfaction achieved is totally self-located. They cannot give or share pleasure when it is all directed toward the self. Like the sex criminal, their objective is ultimately self-defeating. They share the desire for domination and a craving for the ultimate sexual fulfillment. This obsession with a notion of perfect sex with an ideal, objectified partner brings much greater intensity to the sex act than a physical partner. Both types are chained to the illusive nature of their sexual fantasies. They allow their fantasies to create an over-expectation of what mere physical sex can provide. They become addicted to the myth of an ultimate sexual fix, of controlling and repeating the peak experience.

The male sex drive is often active or aggressive. Even a large percentage of normal men desire a level of passivity in the female response to their sexual needs. In turn, many women accept this passive role in exchange for things like security and companionship.³² However, for some men this is not enough and the sex drive becomes overpowering. They want complete subjugation in a sexual partner, with an excessive insistence upon complete passivity. It becomes an aberration and a subversion of the normal

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sex drive. Thus what the rapist, sex killer, necrophile and the person who requires a non-responding partner have in common is the desire to conquer and possess the other. They suffer from a kind of inverted Cassanova complex. They are attracted to a symbolic representation of woman, rather than an actual person.

DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC ORGASM?

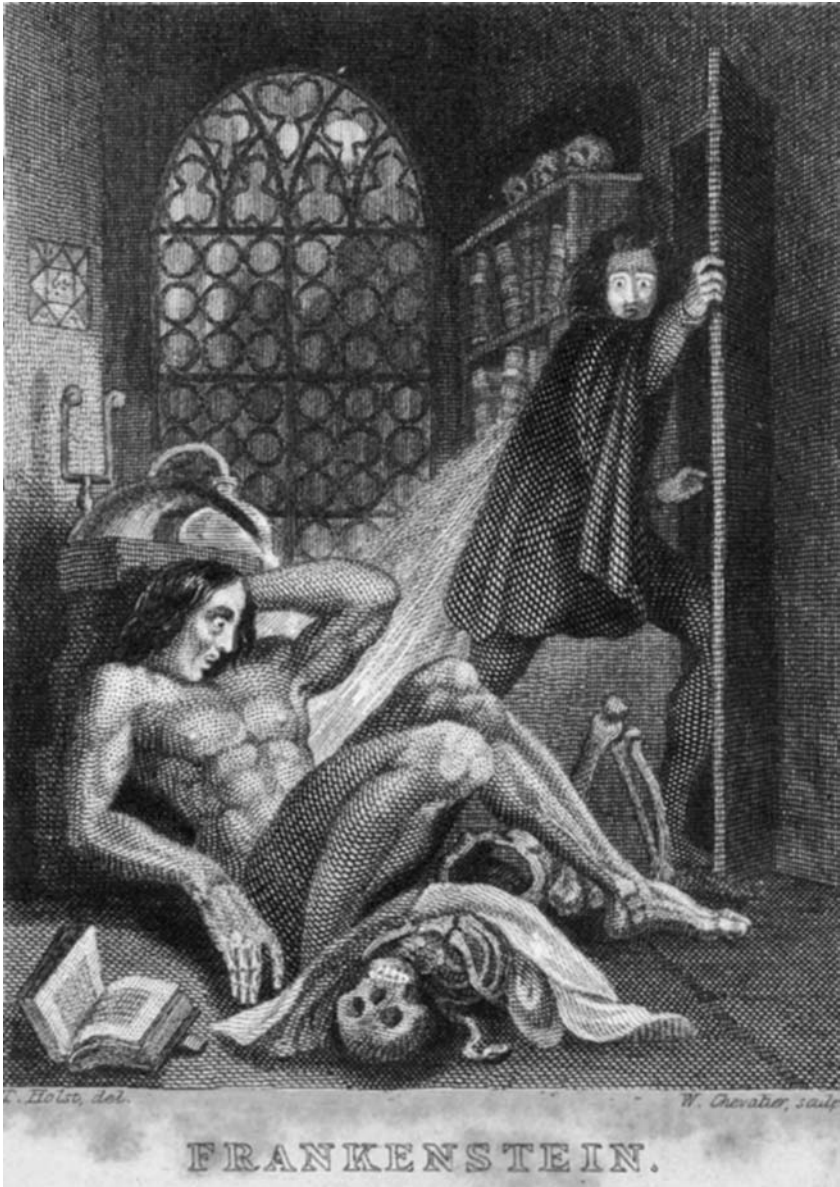
*The spectre of the future is not that women will be slaves,
but that we will be robots.* — Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*

Idealized Women and Gynoids in Film and Literature

The notion of the perfect woman has been a recurring theme in the history of art and literature. From the ancient classics to contemporary science fiction, the dream of reducing female sexuality to its reproductive or recreational function has been a persistent fantasy. In this chapter we take a look at some of the literary, cinematic and artistic representations of gynoids, with a view to demonstrating the long genesis of an idea which became reality with the creation of the sex doll as a consumer item. Perhaps the earliest literary reference to artificial or idealized women occurs in the ancient myth of the Cypriot king Pygmalion and his sculptured love interest, Galatea. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, helped Pygmalion consummate his desire for Galatea by giving her life. This story has been reinterpreted many times, most famously by Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw in the 1916 drama *Pygmalion*. The fantasy of sexualized female robots or gynoids has been a staple of the science fiction genre since its inception, while Japanese Manga artists have long had a love affair with the subject.

The concept of animating an inanimate figure via ritual is one of the mainstays of magical ceremonies. It embodies all the notions of control over another being, and it also features heavily in our cultural and literary pantheon. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) represents an attempt to marry this ritualistic concept to science. She drew some of her inspiration from the ancient Greek story of Prometheus, who was said to have attempted to animate a man made of clay, and to have stolen the secret of fire from the gods. The first story of Prometheus plasticator, is given in

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The engraved frontispiece for the revised 1831 edition of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* shows the horror encompassed by the concept.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The second is in Aeschylus's *Prometheus*. Shelley is vague as to how, exactly, her creature comes to life. There are, however, hints at familiar nineteenth century motifs such as grave-robbing and animal vivisection: "Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? ... I collected bones from charnel-houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame."¹

Shelley was heavily influenced by the contemporary scientific fascination with the possibility of regeneration.² She was also keen to raise the spectre of the separation of biology from the scientific creation of life. This is evinced in the text by Victor Frankenstein's total abandonment of nurturing and responsibility for his unfortunate creation. This point is emphasized by Dr. Siv Jannsen in his introduction to the Wordsworth Classic version of the text. "The novel articulates a confrontation between a scientific pursuit seen as masculine and a feminine 'nature' which is perverted or destroyed by masculinity."³

Benign selfishness and ignorance about nurturing his creation is what brings Victor Frankenstein and his immediate circle of family and friends to ruin at the hands of the misunderstood monster.

This notion of a lack of empathetic nurturing of the delicate female psyche is prevalent throughout literature in terms of male/female relationships. Women with their wild, illogical passions drive men to distraction, unwittingly causing them to commit acts of violence in their attempts to control and constrain female desire. The great nineteenth century English poet Robert Browning produced two works which illustrate this conflict succinctly. "Porphyria's Lover" or "Porphyria," first published in the *Monthly Repository* in January 1836, is voiced by an unnamed protagonist who recounts how he killed his illicit lover Porphyria by strangling her with her own hair, just so that he can keep her forever. The excerpt at the head of Chapter 9 is taken from this poem. Tormented by his free-spirited lover, the protagonist concludes that the only way to dominate her is to overpower her with violence, thus bringing her completely under his control.

In a similar vein is Browning's later poem "My Last Duchess," first published in 1842 in his *Dramatic Lyrics*. The protagonist, based on a real historical figure, Alfonso, the duke of Ferrara from 1559–1597, entertains

an emissary come to negotiate his marriage to the daughter of another powerful family. He shows the visitor around, lingering at a painting of his former wife, also a young girl. As the duke's reminiscing becomes more detailed, the reader gradually realizes that the duke had the former duchess killed for what he perceived to be her feminine wiles. The duke regarded his wife as nothing more than a chattel, one of his possessions. He admires the painting because unlike the girl it is modeled on, it contains only an outer beauty and none of the troublesome inner qualities, such as freedom of thought or emotion. Like the subject in "Porphyria's Lover," both women are victims of the masculine desire to impose a rigid morality on female behavior. For the Victorians of Browning's day, undergoing increasing industrialization and social complexity, the desire to control behavior and constrain it to a generic level of acceptability were of the utmost importance. The victims of this constraint were usually women and children.

A later English novelist, H. Rider Haggard, chose to explore the myth of the immortal, sexually powerful woman in his African adventure classic *She* (1887). This was the first of a series of four novels featuring Ayesha — she who must be obeyed, the eternal white queen of a mythological central African tribe. The story concerns the adventures of the English explorer Leo Vincey, who follows a mysterious family legacy to travel to darkest Africa in search of a lost kingdom governed by an immortal sorceress who had slain his ancestor, an Egyptian priest known as Kallikrates, some 2,000 years before. Vincey duly discovers the lost catacombs of the ancient kingdom of Kor and encounters Queen Ayesha, who immediately recognizes him as the reincarnation of her ancient lover Kallikrates, whom she had regretfully slain in a fit of jealous rage.

Eventually, after Leo is almost killed in a fight with a cannibal tribe, Ayesha restores him to health and reveals the secret of her longevity, a mysterious pillar of fire at the heart of a volcano. Ayesha bids Leo walk through the fire with her and rule alongside her for eternity. When he balks at this because of his Christian beliefs, she attempts to show him the way. Unfortunately, by entering the eternal flame twice she loses her power and withers and dies before his eyes, promising to return, as indeed she does in several sequels.⁴ Rider Haggard's novel is certainly well regarded. There are at least nine film versions, and both Freud and Jung refer to Ayesha in their psychoanalytic work. Much like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, it

is a tale of immortal love. Ayesha is the prototypical all-powerful feminine figure. She is to be simultaneously desired and feared, an ageless, beautiful creature who does not hesitate to kill anyone who displeases her or stands in her way. The character of Ayesha is similar to the stereotypical gynoid fantasy of technosexuals — cold, calculating, ruthless, emotionless, yet never-changing and eternally beautiful.

Some of the earliest modern literary references to artificial women were published in France in the mid- to late nineteenth century, around the same time that a cultural fascination with automatons developed after their appearance in public displays. In 1860 the French author Charles Barbara penned a collection of stories called *Les Petites-Maisons*, one of which concerns a character named Major Whittington, who constructs for himself an entire family of gynoids, female automatons. In 1866, Villiers de L'Isle Adam produced the novel *L'Eve Future*, about a lovesick lord who finds his sweetheart so cold and unresponsive that he has a gynoid created to replace her. In 1899 the pornographic novel *La Femme Endormie*, anonymously written under the pseudonym Madame B., utilized an artificial doll as its central figure. The author beguiles us in the preface, indicating that the doll “can be employed for all possible sexual artificialities, without, like a living woman, resisting them in any way.” The latter two novels are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

One of the earliest cinematic references to artificial women occurs in German director Ernst Lubitsch's *Die Puppe* (The Puppet, 1919). It is loosely based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffman, in which a wealthy baron, attempting to preserve the family bloodline, forces his insipid son to choose one of the common village girls to marry. The son, Lancelot, duly flees to a monastery. When the monks learn that the baron is offering a large sum for his son to marry, they suggest that he marry a mechanical doll the local doll maker has created in the image of his own daughter. However, the doll maker's assistant inadvertently breaks the doll, so he convinces the real girl to mimic the doll instead. Lancelot buys the doll, not knowing she is the actual daughter, and they return to the monastery to wed.

Another early film reference to gynoids occurs in one of the greatest films of the silent era, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). The plot is centered on the classic mother/whore dichotomy. An eccentric inventor (Rotwang) builds an android replica of the deceased love of his life (Hel). The android

is given the facial features of the love interest of the inventor's nephew, a girl named Maria. Rotwang is delighted with his creation, but muses prophetically early in the piece, "All it is missing is a soul." Much like Shelley's Frankenstein, the android sets out on a path of destruction, encouraging the workers of Metropolis to rise up and destroy the city and themselves. She is opposed and ultimately defeated by the real Maria, who unites rather than divides the workers, and leads them to overthrow the oppressive creator of the Metropolis through reasoning and dialogue, rather than violence. The film essentially reflects the cultural distrust of women, as is represented in the split between the good nurturing mother figure and the evil seductress. There is one particularly symbolic episode early in the film when the android Maria seduces the workers by performing an erotic dance routine. The theme of the mother/whore dichotomy is featured in numerous horror films, some of which are discussed in the following chapter.

On a lighter note, the 1949 English film *The Perfect Woman* is a romantic comedy about the creation of a robot woman by an eccentric professor. Adapted from a stage play by Wallace Geoffrey and Basil Mitchell, and starring Patricia Roc, Stanley Holloway and Nigel Patrick, the plot is centered on a case of mistaken identity. An upper class gentleman and his butler sidekick are hired by a nutty professor to take his newly invented robot woman out on the town to see if she can fit seamlessly into society. Unbeknownst to all, a maid conspires with the professor's pretty young niece, on whom the robot is modeled, to switch the two, so the sheltered girl can enjoy a night out with the two gentlemen. Obviously, the plot was heavily influenced by Lubitsch's *Die Puppe*. The humor ensues when the girl pretends to be the gynoid. The romance ensues when the wealthy bachelor falls in love with the gynoid over the course of the evening. The duplicity is discovered but love wins out. Boy marries girl, while the gynoid self-destructs and they all live happily ever after. Perhaps the most telling piece of dialogue occurs early in the film when the professor says, "I call her the perfect woman because she does exactly as she's told. She doesn't speak. She doesn't eat, and you can leave her switched off for months at a time." This speech certainly encapsulates the masculine fantasy stereotype of the gynoid.

The 1960s ushered in an era of free love and more open expression of human sexuality, which was reflected in the cinema of the period. This

is particularly noticeable in comparison with the ultra-conservative Hollywood product of the 1950s and before. A handful of films appeared which directly referenced the growing phenomenon of sex dolls. George Kuschar's *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966) is an avant-garde pastiche of the Hollywood system which juxtaposes the dull reality of everyday life with the glamour of Hollywood filmmaking. The film centers around the doomed efforts of Phillip, a suburban nonentity, in his vain attempts to make a feature film. When his main actress abandons the project, tired of being naked in every scene, Phillip briefly replaces her with an inflatable doll.

In the same year, Japanese director Shohei Imamura brought out the black comedy *The Pornographers*, adapted from a novel by Akiyuki Nosaka. Ostensibly about a minor pornographer who attempts to create the perfect sex doll, the film is really concerned with providing a rare insight into the darker side of Japanese society in the mid 1960s. Its major themes are voyeurism and incest. Subu is a middle-aged barber by trade who makes 8mm pornographic films to satisfy the jaded palates of his downtrodden clientele, when he is not busy avoiding the unwelcome attention of the Yakuza, the Japanese mafia, who want a cut of his profits. Subu is involved in a relationship with his landlady, Haru, and her two teenage children, Koichi and Keiko. Haru believes that the soul of her dead husband resides in a carp she keeps in a tank in the family home, and she suffers guilt from the fact that she promised her husband she would never take another man. Her son Koichi makes continual financial demands on his mother and her lover, while the fifteen-year-old daughter, Keiko, is a Lolita-like figure who cuts school, drinks to excess and sleeps around with older men. To compound Subu's misery, Haru slowly goes mad, and he secretly lusts after his step-daughter, surreptitiously fondling her while she is in a state of drunken semi-consciousness, and sniffing her panties when she is out of the house. Perhaps the implication is that Subu tries to create a perfect doll to represent the lust object he cannot have. In this, his behavior is similar to that exhibited by Hans Bellmer with his dolls in the 1930s. Opinion is divided on the merits of this film. Those who champion its cult status point to the voyeurism symbolized by Imamura's tendency to shoot his characters at great distance through windows and doorways via a telescopic lens as a deliberate attempt to comment on the Japanese culture of the time. There is a particularly telling scene in which three filmmakers discuss the moral implications of a man sleeping with his own daughter.

The most prominent sixties film which touched on the issue of gynoid sex was the cult classic *Barbarella*. In Jean Claude Forest's 1967 comic book of the same name, an android lover apologizes to the highly sexed heroine for his mechanical love-making technique. In the Roger Vadim feature film that followed in 1968, *Barbarella* (Jane Fonda) prances around a sixties-inspired, free-love universe, killing off robotic detractors and sexually rewarding the males who assist her. On route she is attacked by carnivorous children's dolls with sharp metallic teeth, and manages to destroy Duran Duran's (Milo O'Shea) orgasm-inducing, musical execution pleasure machine with her insatiable sexuality. In one scene, she demonstrates with a willing partner the future method of sexual intercourse, the mutual swallowing of a pill and the joining of hands. The sensual interaction takes place in the brain, rather than between the loins. The narrative explains that this is done because hundreds of centuries earlier, humanity discovered that sex is "distracting to human efficiency," a reference to the early twentieth century theories of Taylor and Gramsci. However, in keeping with the cultural milieu of the swinging sixties, *Barbarella* soon proves that the old-fashioned way is the best.

In the 1970s, the awareness of sex dolls spread, particularly as they now began to appear in the sex shops which spread across the suburbs of the western world. The dolls began to appear in contemporary fiction, initially as comic figures. In his 1973 collection *South of No North*, the late American author Charles Bukowski included a short story titled "Love for \$17.50." Its protagonist is a man who fantasizes about making love to wax dummies at the local museum before plucking up the nerve to purchase his own mannequin. Love blossoms until his real life girlfriend discovers the affair, and destroys the dummy in a fit of pique. A sex doll features as the central plot motif in Tom Sharpe's 1976 comic novel *Wilt*, in which an observer witnesses the main protagonist, Henry Wilt, secretly burying his sex doll and mistakenly reports a murder. The book plays on the stereotype of the insipid English henpecked husband and the emotionally cold, domineering wife he fantasizes about killing.

One of the first modern films about fear of gynoids was the 1975 Columbia and Palomar Pictures production *The Stepford Wives*, directed by Brian Forbes and based on the novel by Ira Levin. In the fictional contemporary American town of Stepford, the well-heeled husbands form a secret society where they scheme to replace their wives with subservient,

robotic sex slaves. While the means of achieving this was veiled in secrecy, the message was clear. Real women are emotional, demanding, disruptive, and threatening to male security, thus they need to be subjugated to masculine control to become perfect wives — beautiful, obedient and servile. The main female protagonist, Joanna, and her best friend Bobby embody all of the negative characteristics so irksome to the masculine ego. They are independent, thoughtful and outspoken about their rights within the marriage relationship. Joanna has even pursued an independent career in photography.

It is fascinating to watch the machinations of sexual politics in action, as one by one the women of Stepford are reduced to servile, domesticated gynoids. As Joanna becomes more aware of the sinister plot and more estranged from her husband, she is the one who is made to feel unreasonable. In fact we witness a return to the Victorian pathology of women's hysteria in the face of reason. Joanna is portrayed as hysterical for refusing to conform, and for even suggesting that something is amiss. When she confronts the leader of the men's society and asks him why, he simply answers, "Because we can. It's perfect for us, perfect for you." As Joanna's android doppelganger closes in for the kill, order is restored to Stepford's patriarchal utopian/dystopian society, and the chilling final scene depicts a supermarket filled with trolley-wheeling, mindless gynoids, happily fulfilling the domestic needs of their men, freed from the unnecessary burden of individual thought. The film was remade in 2004 as a comedy with Nicole Kidman in the lead role. The later version has a further irony as the supposed patriarch and creator of the gynoids turns out to be an android himself. It is his wife who is the true creator.

The 1982 British black comedy *Britannia Hospital*, directed by Lindsay Anderson, is the third and final part of a loosely connected trilogy following the travails of everyman and lead protagonist Mick Travis (portrayed by Malcolm McDowell). The previous two movies in the series were *If* and *O Lucky Man*. In *Britannia Hospital*, Travis is an investigative reporter filming a secret documentary on the sinister activities of one of the hospital's surgeons, Professor Millar. Millar murders Travis and removes his head, before eventually announcing to a gathered audience including the Queen Mother, that he has been working on a Genesis Project to perfect mankind. In a bizarre parody of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, he reveals his creation, a brain wired to a computer. When afforded the opportunity to

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speak, the head recites a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "What a piece of work is a man," before the voice tracker gets stuck and endlessly repeats, "How like a God," as the headless animated corpse of the rest of the Genesis Project runs amok around the hospital.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* was hugely influential in the way it portrayed the dangers inherent in playing god, and it has a continued influence on the science fiction genre in particular. One of the best examples is found in Ridley Scott's classic *Bladerunner* (1982), which is based on the Phillip K. Dick novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The film differs significantly from Dick's novel. Specifically, in the novel, the android Rachael merely seduces Deckard to try to keep him from retiring her fellow androids. Deckard subsequently rejects her and returns to a wife he doesn't have in the film version. Also, the character of Roy Baty (original spelling) in the novel is less grandiose and philosophical than the character in the film. Indeed the Roy Baty of the novel is dispatched rather easily. The text forecasts a nightmarish future while simultaneously exploring one of the great themes of science fiction, the potential clash between human and android. The main question posed in the story is what will happen when android slaves start to think for themselves?

Bladerunner is set in a dystopian Los Angeles of 2019. The cynical detective Deckard is dragged out of retirement against his will and tasked with locating and eliminating a group of rogue "replicants," who have mutinied on one of the planet's off-world colonies and hijacked a ship back to Earth. The replicants are servant androids which have begun to think and feel for themselves, and thus abandoned their programming, which conditions them to obey and serve the whims of human beings. We learn that Deckard is recalled because he was the police department's best *Bladerunner*, an elite policeman who specializes in identifying and destroying (or as the film has it, "retiring") androids. Some of these androids are female, and there is some indication that they provide sexual services to their human masters. Indeed, one of the female replicants is referred to by Deckard's superior as a "basic pleasure model." Deckard's problem is in differentiating the androids from ordinary human beings because technology has advanced to a stage where it is extremely difficult to tell human and robot apart.

The twist in the story is that the androids have acclimatized to the human condition to such an extent that they are no longer distinguishable

from us, except that they have a built-in failure mechanism that shortens their life span to four years. It is this that they are rebelling against. They do not mind mortality, for they share that with humans, but they want an equal lifespan. But the fear that machines might eventually start to develop human emotions and feelings was the reason that their creators, the Tyrell Corporation, instigated the limited life span in the first place. This motivation is significant. If the androids were seeking immortality, then their otherness and anti-human stance would make sense. However, they rail only against the injustice of their shortened lives, and the humans are the monsters, the evildoers. Like Prometheus, the humans seek to play God with creation, and, like Victor Frankenstein, they choose to eliminate nurture from their creation, replacing it with cold, hard, self-serving science. This is spoken in a heartfelt soliloquy by the dying Roy Batty, the last rogue replicant. Played by Rutger Hauer, Batty is the unofficial spokesperson of the androids: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in the rain. Time to die."⁵ Batty makes these remarks to Deckard immediately after preventing him from falling off a high-rise building. Deckard hangs precariously from a rafter by one hand. Immediately prior to saving him, Batty says, "Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it? That's what it is to be a slave." In taking this action Batty demonstrates his humanity, by making the ethical decision to preserve the life of a representative of the species that takes the life of his own kind away. In many ways, Roy Batty is the equivalent of Frankenstein's monster. Both are angry with and alienated from their creators. Both desire an equal opportunity to live and love freely And ultimately, both turn upon their creators and destroy them. In a similar manner, Dr. Tyrell, the twisted genius behind the Tyrell Corporation, is the equivalent of Victor Frankenstein, bringing forth life and then abandoning his parental duty to that life.

The great irony in the text is the love that develops between Deckard and Rachael, a late-model replicant so advanced that she does not even know she is a replicant until Deckard "tests" her authenticity. Implanted with the false memories of a childhood she never had, Rachael is the gynoid equivalent of Deckard's alienated outsider. In Dick's original novel, despite Deckard's eventual rejection of Rachael, there is still every indication that they are in love. Rachael muses on their plight, and more specifically, the plight of the android with human emotions:

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How does it feel to have a child? How does it feel to be born, for that matter? We're not born; we don't grow up; instead of dying from illness or old age, we wear out like ants. That's what we are. Not you, I mean me. Chitinous reflex machines who aren't really alive. You're not going to bed with a woman. Don't be disappointed, okay? Have you ever made love to an android before?⁶

Our acceptance that we are not the most important species in existence, but merely one strand in the vast web of life, means that we can learn to appreciate the sentience of not only the members of the human and animal kingdoms, but potentially of androids as well. This potentiality is hinted at in the film when the final scene sees Deckard attempting to flee with Rachael into an unknowable future.

The 1987 Orion Pictures International science fiction movie *Cherry 2000* (produced by Edwin R. Pressman) has as its premise a man's search for an ideal sex and life partner. It is set in a post-nuclear holocaust America in the year 2017. Man appears to have given up on the concept of marriage and relationships with real women. Instead he relies upon gynoid partners, cybernetic sex robots with an encoded personality recorded onto a micro chip, allowing them to simulate real sexual behavior. The protagonist, Sam Treadwell (David Andrews), has his life thrown into chaos when his idyllic relationship with his vacuous but loving gynoid, Cherry (Pamela Gidley), comes to a premature halt due to some ill-advised sex on a soap-sud-filled floor, sending Cherry's circuits into total meltdown.

With the concept of love usurped by robotic women, the top of the range model is the Cherry 2000, a gynoid "designed only to please her master." When his Cherry goes offline, Treadwell is advised to seek out the best "tracker" in the business, a mysterious figure known as E. Johnson, to take him into the wastelands to the robot graveyard, where for some reason all the sex dolls are stored. The Cherry 2000 has a chip inserted carefully behind her ear which contains her personality, memory, vocal patterns and reflex actions. All Sam has to do is get another doll, and insert Cherry's personality into it. Before he does so, a dealer shows him several alternate models, one of which, interestingly, is a teenage girl dressed in a school uniform and sporting pigtails called the Bambi 14. Sam is also taken by some male workmates into a club that features real women. The Glu Glu Club is a futuristic nightmare world where shrewish women and sleazy men negotiate one-night stands through a mediator and a legal contract.

THE SEX DOLL

The narrative emphasizes that this is the future of biological relationships, a series of fiscal negotiations with all of the passion drained away. Here we encounter the first of several negative portrayals of women in this film. Sam is verbally abused by one woman for not having up-to-date legal documents, while another aggressive and argumentative woman pulls out of a deal for sex with an anonymous suitor because the financial details are not acceptable to her.

Sam travels into what appears to be a parody of an old Western town to locate his mysterious tracker. At the aptly named Glory Hole hotel, he spies a sign swinging in the wind outside his window, advertising the services of E. Johnson with the slogan, "Never says no." Johnson, to Sam's surprise, turns out to be a woman rather than a man (a young Melanie Griffith). Sam carries Cherry's chip around with him and we hear the android's disembodied voice repeatedly tell Sam, "I love you." But significantly, we never hear him say it to her. In an earlier scene, Cherry verbally guided his sexual performance, telling him how good he made her feel. Johnson similarly guides the virginal Sam through the forbidden zone, and the dangers presented by several male predators en route. The journey they undertake allows this seemingly incompatible duo the opportunity to bond. Johnson tries to convince her client that the dolls are just robots, and implies that they cannot give a true emotional response. At one point she screams at Sam, both prophetically and metaphorically, "I'm not a fucking machine," when he compares her unfavorably to Cherry. This is significant because Cherry is nothing more than a machine that fornicates. As one of the characters they encounter Six-Fingered Jack prophetically states, "There's a lot more to love than hot wiring."

At one point in the journey Sam is waylaid at an oasis called the Sky Ranch. By sheer coincidence, he finds an ex-girlfriend there, Elaine. She is an airhead hooked up with Lester, the psychopathic overseer of the wasteland. Elaine continually reminds Sam that he never listened to her, while constantly exhibiting the same trait herself. Pursued by Lester's gang and Elaine, the intrepid travelers reach the robot graveyard, recognizable as Las Vegas through bits of buildings jutting out of the sand. In the climactic scenes, Treadwell and Johnson enter a showroom that resembles a morgue and seek out a Cherry 2000 model. However, upon inserting her memory chip, Sam finally realizes that Cherry is more wooden than Melanie Griffith, with all the personality of a toaster. As Lester's hordes make their final

assault, Treadwell makes his escape in an old airplane restored to service by the ever-resourceful Johnson. Forced to choose between the two women to make the plane light enough for takeoff, he chooses the living, breathing Johnson, and the two fly away over the horizon, locked in a loving embrace. Cherry, meanwhile, is left to provide company for the equally vacuous Elaine.

From the 1990s on, Hollywood produced numerous science fiction films which touched on the concept of artificial love. Brett Leonard's 1994 opus *Lawnmower Man* has an interesting virtual love scene in which a powerful, sexually aggressive woman has her mind destroyed during sex with the somewhat autistic title character. Sex dolls also get a mention in the *Austin Powers* series (1996–98). Although presented in a largely humorous vein, the fembots who terrorize Powers unwittingly portray a stereotype of female sexuality as simultaneously alluring and dangerous. The fembots seem to divide their time equally between seduction and assassination. Even Austin's new bride, played by Liz Hurley, turns out to be a psychopathic fembot, largely because she refused to appear in the sequel. The roles are temporarily reversed in Steven Spielberg's 2001 film *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.*, in which Jude Law plays a sexbot called Gigolo Joe. This male sexbot is also able to offer emotional support in addition to sex.

The French film *Monique* (2002) is a romantic comedy about the trials and tribulations of marriage. Alex (Albert Dupontel) and Claire (Marianne Denicourt) are the archetypal modern French couple. He is a professional photographer for a fashion magazine and she is his attractive, educated wife. The two have been married for some time and no longer communicate effectively, and as a result, Alex loses interest in life and slides into a mid-life crisis. When the relationship sours, they separate and Alex shuts himself off from everyone. He locks himself away in their home while Claire takes off to live with friends and fraternize with her new lover, who is good-looking, intelligent and attentive. In desperation, Alex hooks up with the eponymous Monique (RealDoll "Julie"), a sex doll he buys over the Internet. He lavishes her with clothes and presents and the relationship develops, until he decides to bring her out of the closet and introduce her to his friends.

The 2002 novel *Satisfaction* by the French erotic novelist Alina Reyes reflects on the impact of modern technology on the sex doll industry. The theme is familiar. A typical suburban couple, Babe and Bobby, have been

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married for years and have a non-existent sex life, which threatens to force them apart. He spends some time on the Internet and discovers sex dolls. He subsequently buys one of the silicone models, which he hides from his wife and has secret sex with. One night Babe wakes up in their bed and finds him gone. When she discovers him *in flagrante delicto* with another woman on the hood of his car in the garage she first assumes that the incredibly lifelike doll is his mistress. However, when she fails to see the mistress leave, she discovers the doll in the trunk of the car, and amazed by its verisimilitude, she has sex with it herself and discovers new pleasures. When the two protagonists discover one another's preoccupation with the doll, they take it to their marriage bed and through the doll, rekindle their own passion.

Robert Parigi directed the 2003 thriller *Love Object*, in which Desmond Harrington plays Kenneth, an emotionally disturbed young man who attempts to literally transform his real life girlfriend into the image of a rubber sex doll, "Nikki," which he purchases and obsesses over. In this bizarre psychological tale, Kenneth imagines he is being stalked by Nikki and "kills" her, then kidnaps his real-life ex, Lisa, and attempts to transform her into Nikki. After Kenneth murders his landlord within earshot of an increasingly unhinged Lisa, she escapes and attacks Kenneth. Having found the bodies of the landlord and Nikki in a dumpster, the police arrive to see Lisa, dressed in Nikki's clothes, about to stab Kenneth. Thinking the roles are reversed and Kenneth is the victim, the police shoot Lisa dead. At the film's conclusion, Kenneth orders a new Nikki doll then begins to obsess over a girl at a flower shop where he goes to buy flowers for Nikki. Viewers are left with the impression that the cycle is about to repeat itself.

Somnophilia is the theme of the French Hitchcockian thriller *Qui a tué le Bambi?* (*Who Killed Bambi?* 2005). A young nurse subject to bouts of narcolepsy begins to fall for a mysterious surgeon who takes her under his wing. The roguishly handsome doctor christens her Bambi, because of her inability to stay on her feet due to her medical condition. The name connotes innocence and the idea of young girls leaving the nurture of their mothers and venturing out into the world. As Bambi slowly begins to penetrate the twilight world of the reticent surgeon, she is prompted by his rejection of her gentle sexual advances toward him to investigate his movements more closely. Then she discovers his dark and monstrous secret.

The surgeon is a somnambulist. He is only aroused by sleeping women and has sex with attractive female patients after drugging them. Worse still, the nefarious doctor soon turns to murder to cover his tracks when one of his victims awakens as he undresses her. The story follows Bambi's increasingly desperate attempts to convince the hospital board of the truth, while avoiding becoming the killer's next victim. Ironically, in death she will become attractive to him in a way she cannot while she is alive.

The short film *Mail Order Bride* (2006), written and directed by David Quitmeyer, is an erotic horror comedy about a computer programmer named Steve (Corey Foxx). After experiencing a number of disastrous relationships, Steve orders a love doll he sees advertised on late night television, a gynoid referred to as "The Personal Concubine 2000." When the doll (portrayed by the actress Caroline Pierce) arrives, it looks more like a latter day Bride of Frankenstein than a sophisticated gynoid. Steve follows the instructions which explain that all he has to do to animate his doll is sit her in front of the television and let her absorb data to charge her batteries and memory banks then she can pleasure him in any way he desires. Unfortunately, Steve unwittingly allows her to watch an all-night horror movie marathon and the results are disastrous. The film is essentially a sly dig at technosexuals and their attempt to cure the malaise of loneliness by turning away from flesh and blood relationships and embracing technology instead.

The year 2007 saw the release of the Nancy Oliver black comedy *Lars and the Real Girl*, in which Ryan Gosling plays Lars, a lonely young man who purchases and falls in love with a life-sized sex doll. After the initial shock, Lars's immediate family and the entire community support his unusual choice of a girlfriend (the relationship is never consummated) and his subsequent quest to uncover the true meaning of love. Oliver manages to successfully entwine elements of humor, whimsy and pathos in this quiet and reflective piece, which is the first mainstream feature film made which gives serious consideration to the role of the sex doll in modern society. The doll is never treated with contempt or as an object of ridicule, nor is the main protagonist. In fact, the doll acts as the catalyst for Lars's re-engagement with society. The film may well come to be seen as a watershed in mainstream acceptance of sex dolls and artificial partners. On the other hand, it might be derided by technosexuals for its dismissal of the doll as an ancillary love object.

Sex Doll Porn

Over the past twenty years, gynoids and sex dolls have begun to appear in the pornographic film industry as well as in mainstream cinema. One significant earlier contribution was director Radley Metzger's *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*, produced in 1976, which uses George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* as its inspiration. However this film features neither doll nor gynoid, merely a regular girl naive in the ways of love, who acts as an empty cipher to receive lessons, much like a robot. The pornographic twist is that the education of the naive nymphet is sexual rather than elocutionary. According to Laurence O'Toole in his modern epic on the history of pornography, *Pornocopia*, this is the very best pornographic film ever made. This is, according to O'Toole, largely because unlike so many of its successors, this film has a solid script and decent actors. Ultimately, like its famous literary inspiration, it is a love story (with a lot of sex thrown in), and the student ends up teaching a lesson in love and life to her master.⁷

The RealDoll phenomenon that swept the online world in the late 1990s was not lost on the neighboring California pornography industry. Hence the decade saw the release of the first pornographic movie to feature a sex doll as one of the lead characters. *RealDoll: The Movie* (1999) starred Ron Jeremy and Shayla LaVeaux, and was little more than an X-rated advertorial for the company Abyss Creations. This was followed a decade later by the release of *Regarding Jenny* (2009) by Maddy G. Productions, another film starring a doll from the RealDoll catalog. The Jenny of the title role is also set to star in an online adult sitcom called *Inside Marie's Playplace*, which is accessible on pay per view on adult cable channels. A series of shorts produced in the United States in 2005 titled *Inflated: The Blow Up Doll Films of Steve Hall and Cathee Wilkins* were avant-garde experimental art house films, parodies of traditional 8mm stag pornographic movies whose female leads were two inflatable dolls called Candy and Summer.

Television and Documentary

The twenty-year period between 1950 and 1970 witnessed the creation of a number of atypical female television characters with certain gynoid

characteristics. (It could also be argued that nearly all of the stereotypical female soap opera characters in the television dramas of the fifties and sixties were somewhat robotic and interchangeable.) Consider Maureen Robinson from *Lost in Space* and Carol Brady of *The Brady Bunch* as just two of many examples. These two would not be out of place in the *Stepford Wives*, with their subservience to husband and family. However, a number of female characters appear not to fit the happy housewife paradigm, but on closer analysis, were working very hard to get there. Samantha Stevens, the witch in *Bewitched*, for example, spent her entire television career denying her magical powers to try to fit the role of a normal housewife. In doing so, she also relinquished the opportunity to lord it over husband Darren and make him her slave. Jeannie from *I Dream of Jeannie* was another ethereal blonde with stunning magical powers who wanted nothing more from life than to live in married subservience to the man who rubbed her magic lamp.

Perhaps the best gynoid representation in sixties soap opera occurred in the show *My Living Doll*, in which a bachelor enjoys the services of a beautiful robot maid. The show ran for almost a year, between September 27, 1964, and September 8, 1965. The AF709 (air force) fembot, played by Julie Newmar, is introduced to a psychiatrist, Dr. Robert MacDonald (Bob Cummings). He soon learns that she is in fact a robot built by his absent friend Dr. Carl Miller. MacDonald passes the gynoid off as his friend's niece and names her Rhoda. The good doctor then sets about teaching Rhoda how to be the perfect woman, silent and obedient to men while she learns how to cook, clean and sew. When she is disobedient, she has an off switch. However, MacDonald has to contend with a nosy neighbor, Peter Robinson (Jack Mullanes), who soon develops an obsession with Rhoda, and his sister Irene (Doris Dowling), who moves in with him to chaperone the young woman. Much of the humor stems from MacDonald's efforts to keep her robot identity a secret.

Produced by Jack Chertok, who also oversaw the more famous series *My Favorite Martian*, *My Living Doll*'s lead role was initially going to be offered to erotomaniac Bob Crane, but the CBS network did not think Crane was up to the job of carrying a comedy series. (Crane went on to carry *Hogan's Heroes* to fame and fortune before his own peccadilloes sent him to an early grave.) Behind the camera there was major disagreement between the two leads, Cummings, who was a successful actor and saw

himself as a father figure to the rest of the cast, and Newmar, who resented his coaching. As a result, Cummings was fired from the show, and custody of Rhoda passed to next door neighbor Robinson. Despite Julie Newmar's success in the role, the show never rated well. The scripts were full of cliché, and some viewers objected to the sexism. Others thought it was nothing more than an adolescent sex fantasy. Eighty percent of Julie Newmar's fan mail during the series' run came from young males.⁸

Skipping forward three decades, great advances in technology brought a glut of gynoid action in the sci-fi/horror film genre, but little in the field of television drama. One short-lived offering comes to mind. *Mann and Machine* aired from April 5 to July 14, 1992, and was no doubt inspired by the success of the *Robocop* movies. This sci-fi police drama centered on police officer Bobby Mann (played by the same David Andrews who starred in *Cherry 2000*). He is teamed with a cybernetic female partner named Eve Edison (Edison's Eve), played by Yancy Butler. The series ran for just nine episodes before it was canned. Set in the near future, on-screen references suggested a timeframe somewhere between 1998 and 2009, with police duties augmented by rudimentary and unsophisticated robot patrolmen. Then along came Eve, a prototype for a new kind of A.I. robot. She is field tested as Mann's partner. The gist of the story is that Bobby does not like robots, but as the storyline progresses, he grows to appreciate Eve, and see her as more than a mere cyborg. It would have been interesting to see how the relationship progressed had the series survived. Would television writers have dared or been allowed to explore the issue of love between man and gynoid?

Sex dolls have also appeared in comedic guise in a number of television shows. There was a running joke in the 1990s American sitcom *Married With Children* about Bud Bundy and his sex doll. *Ally McBeal* featured an ongoing relationship with a male sex doll. Numerous episodes of *The Jerry Springer Show* have featured men and their relationships with sex dolls. The series *Nip/Tuck* ran a few episodes where a sex doll was accurately modeled on one of the lead characters. More recently the U.S. television series *Pushing Daisies* was based on the concept of bringing the dead back to life (albeit briefly) and had an episode centered on a man obsessing over his sex doll. Since the sex doll market went high tech in 1996 dolls have grown as a plot motif on commercial television. This suggests that, despite their representation as uncanny objects, they are becoming more acceptable

to a mainstream audience. Sex dolls and gynoids are inexorably moving closer to the cultural center and away from the fringes of society.

Perhaps the most famous documentary about sex dolls and technosexuality is the 2001 cult classic *AFSR*. Allison De Fren's seven-minute short film takes us on a tour of the fast-developing world of sex dolls and robots. We learn that technosexuality dates back to the Pygmalion myth and mostly concerns the feminization of objects. Practitioners refer to themselves as ASFRians, and they insist that they are not so concerned about the act of sex itself, but rather the concept of women revealing themselves to be robots. The appeal lies in the transformation of woman into robot, in speech, animation, the capacity to be controlled, the ability to malfunction and in appearance, especially in exposed circuitry. The notion of disassembly is central to the fetish. ASFRian desire is centered on the removal of the mask that is a robot woman's face. In essence, the documentary opines, technosexuality concerns the feminization of objects, not the objectification of women.

A growing mainstream interest in the sex doll genre is manifested in the number of recent documentaries dedicated to the subject. At least three contemporary films have reflected on the impact of new technology on sex dolls and its potential impact on inter-gender relationships in a rapidly evolving culture. The 2003 Swedish documentary *Surplus* is essentially an anti-capitalist rant and a critique of rampant consumerism. In one segment we are taken inside the warehouse of an anonymous company that produces sex dolls, where an unnamed, emotionally flat young man talks us through the range of dolls for sale. The documentary shows the dolls headless and strung up on hooks, dangling from the ceiling like cuts of meat in a butcher shop. The scene is reminiscent of the traditional assembly line, showing that the product is put together just like any other mass-produced item, like a motor vehicle. Thus the negative concepts of commercialism, consumerism, and the loss of individuality expressed in mass production techniques are emphasized. More significantly, the torsos-on-hooks scene is reminiscent of the sight which greeted the police officers who raided infamous 1950s serial killer and necrophile Ed Gein's farmhouse:

Breaking into his summer kitchen, police discovered the victim's headless and gutted corpse suspended upside down from a rafter like a dressed out game animal. Inside the house itself, stunned searchers uncovered a large assortment of unspeakable artefacts — chairs upholstered with human skin,

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soup bowls fashioned from skulls, a shoebox full of female genitalia, faces stuffed with newspapers and mounted like hunting trophies on the walls, and a “mammary vest” flayed from the torso of a woman. Gein later confessed that he enjoyed dressing up in this and other human-skin garments and pretending he was his own mother.⁹

The onscreen narrator, Matt McMullen from Abyss Creations, describes the various features available to the consumer. Variations in body type, head type, breast size, skin color or tanning, makeup/eye shadow, fingernails, hair color, eye color, and so on. The lasting impression of this scene is the cold, passionless, matter-of-fact delivery by McMullen. It is so suggestive of the lifelessness of the dolls he creates that one wonders if he was asked to deliver his lines in this manner to evoke a particular response in the viewer.

A Perfect Fake is a somewhat unsettling 2004 Canadian documentary from Primitive Entertainment which takes as its premise the story of Pygmalion and Galatea from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, and follows it through a logical progression into the modern sex doll phenomenon. It explores the social and psychological impact of CGI technology on human interaction with machines, and the effect on male perception of female sexuality. It examines the development of the search for a perfect woman through rapidly advancing hardware technology. As Mark Sagar of SonyPicturesImageworks remarks, “The face is just a very complicated mathematical pattern.” The face can be replicated, and as technology improves, it will be replicated with increasing verisimilitude. Through interviews with professionals in the fields of technology and psychology, the documentary addresses a range of interesting questions surrounding the search for a perfect (female) simulacrum. One of the most intriguing questions is in an age of mass communication, are celebrities more real than the characters we interact with in a computer game? This seems to suggest that as we become more integrated with the personalized technology at our fingertips, we grow increasingly more remote from our fellow human beings. The characters that gamers inhabit or manipulate on a computer screen may become more familiar, and eventually more “real” than other human beings, who may seem remote and out of reach to a lonely introvert. Such people find it easier to relate to a computer character and may come to endow them with comforting human qualities. From there it is only a small step to considering the computer character as a friend, and again

only another small step to forming a desire for a doll. Either way, the person has the comfort of maintaining control over the relationship, and doesn't have to worry about unpredictable responses.

CGI originated in Japan, which has a particular focus on the impact of the technology. Interviews with leading figures in the industry and with CGI consumers suggest that animated characters become more reliable and trustworthy to consumers than real people over time, because they lack the capacity for emotional change. Perhaps more significantly, because artificial characters lack the capacity to respond, users pay no emotional price and risk no loss. Absolute control of the sexual experience remains with the user, as it is totally one-sided. For some, this is very empowering. As one psychologist remarks, even in genuine, tangible sex, the real action takes place in the minds of the participants. The Japanese make erotic dolls of every shape and size, but not all of them are sexually functional. Some only evoke an emotional response in the observer. One doll maker suggests that dolls can have a calming effect on their owner simply because they are predictable, unchanging and trustworthy, like a faithful pet.

The primary focus of *A Perfect Fake* is the lives of several Japanese men who have chosen to cohabit exclusively with one or more sex dolls. To these men, their dolls are companions, confidants and sexual partners. The documentary manages to convey that these men genuinely love their dolls. They are more than simple inanimate objects. Each man has projected onto a lifeless object the ideals he individually craves in a woman. One interviewee and doll user says, men do this because they are afraid of face-to-face communication with real women, and because they are afraid of change.

Along similar lines, Channel Five in the United Kingdom aired a documentary in September 2006 called *Guys and Dolls*, about RealDolls and their owners. It is similar to *A Perfect Fake*, with a focus on men and their relationships with dolls. But the focus is on American and British men rather than Japanese. This documentary emphasizes that men use dolls for all sorts of reasons, from loneliness and social awkwardness to pure technosexual desire to admiration for their beauty. The film explores the families of the men who use dolls, Abyss Creations and the mechanics of the RealDoll. The documentary focuses on the "otherness" of the four men it interviews, on their profound loneliness and unwillingness to commit to a biological relationship.

Music and Art

The music industry shows the influence of sex dolls on popular culture, and, as with television, references to sex dolls are occurring more regularly as time passes. On one of its early albums, *For Your Pleasure* (1973), Roxy Music sang about the love between a man and his sex doll in the tune "In Every Dream Home a Heartache." Around the same time period, Alice Cooper penned a song about necrophilia, "Cold Ethyl," in which the protagonist keeps his lover in the deep freeze. The popular online encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*, references songs about sex dolls by artists such as Roxy Music, Frank Zappa, Saul Zonana and The Police. At least two comedians have written songs about sex dolls, Canadian Weird Al Yankovic with "Talk Soup" and Australian Tim Minchin with his ode, "Inflatable You." British band Radiohead has produced two songs which refer to the film *The Stepford Wives*. One is called "Bodysnatchers" and the other "A Wolf at the Door."

A number of visual artists have expressed an interest in the cultural meaning of dolls and sex dolls. We have previously discussed the famous Surrealist dolls of Hans Bellmer in the 1930s. In the 1960s, the late Californian folk artist Calvin Black created a "living" montage of more than 80 child-sized, female dolls, each with its own character, history and personality. He painted the dolls and his wife Ruby dressed them. The Blacks created a miniature amusement park, at the heart of which lay the Bird Cage Theatre, where the dolls would regularly "perform," singing in a voice recorded by the artist. The graphic novelist Guy Colwell wrote a series of illustrated stories involving a synthetic woman, *The Adventures of the Doll*, and a sequel, *The Further Adventures of the Doll*, both published in 1989. In 1990 and 1991 New York based artist John LeKay composed a montage of sex scenes featuring inflatable dolls wearing masks in an exhibition called "sex-pieces." In her book, *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality* (2003), the Australian academic Barbara Creed talks about the transformation of the human body as a piece of performance art: "The Australian artist Stellar pioneered cybernetic body art, using robotic medical and new media systems to restructure and transform his body [which is] suffused with wires, electrodes and prosthetic limbs.... The feminist performance artist Orlan has had surgical operations on her face screened in cyberspace."¹¹ One contemporary artist who has taken a direct interest in



The sex doll is slowly seeping into mainstream culture, as witnessed by its incorporation into contemporary works of art like this piece by the New York-based artist John LeKay, circa 1990-91.

the phenomenon of sex dolls is Elena Dorfman. In *Still Lovers* (2005), she produced a book and photographic exhibition with images of eighteen proud owners and their sex dolls. This intriguing series of photographs speaks more about sociology than sex. In his review in *The Village Voice*, critic Vince Alletti alluded to the strange relationships between men and their silent companions in the poignant images: “Dorfman discovered that many of the dolls have become not naked fuck slaves but carefully dressed friends and muses.... At once perverse and pathetic, these discreet scenarios can only hint at the doll owners’ terrible need for companionship.”¹¹

Apart from these more oblique and direct references to sex dolls and gynoids occur in the popular arts all the time. Rapid advancements in robotic and CGI technology and our increased access to information are inexorably bringing awareness of the sex doll into mainstream culture, as evidenced by the increasing references in the various media which chronicle our popular culture. For example, art imitated life when the adult novelty company Pipedream Products offered a range of sex dolls modeled on

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celebrities such as Jessica Simpson, Christina Aguilera, and Paris Hilton. These cultural references have increased exponentially since sex dolls went high tech. Next, we shall consider how literature and cinema have seen a gradual shift in the social construct of the sex doll and the gynoid from “monstrous other” toward something more palatable.

REVULSION, LUST AND LOVE

Devil Dolls and Horror

Throughout the history of literature and cinema, the majority of fictional work about dolls has been negative. Negative connotations are associated with dolls, dummies, doppelgangers and androids throughout the literary field, especially in the horror and science fiction genres. Indeed nearly all literary references to dolls and other replicas fall within these specific genres. In almost every instance the doll is the “other,” a potential threat to the harmony of normal existence, an evil outsider that wants to take over or take away the lives of the protagonist(s). To appreciate how and why this negative association occurs, we must return to Sigmund Freud’s notion of the uncanny.

In his discussion of the uncanny (originally *Das Unheimliche*, *Imago*, 1919) Freud referred to the uncomfortable feeling experienced by adults when they are unable to immediately distinguish between the living and the non-living, or when “a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes.”¹ This emotion is most often felt with any form of replicated humanity, be it a child’s doll, a ventriloquist’s dummy, a lifelike statue, a mannequin or a very realistic sex doll. “It is triggered in particular by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata. A child’s desire for a doll to come to life may become, in adulthood, a fear.”²

The basis of this fear is that it evokes in the mature adult the terrifying uncertainty that we may not be unique as human beings if we can be replicated all too easily in the form of an automaton. This fear is centered in breaking the taboo of unique individuality promised us by our genetic makeup (twins being an exception as well as another common horror trope). The unease is compounded by any evidence of self-generated motion in the doll or android. If that which is not living can somehow move of its own volition, then it threatens our unique place in the universe as living, breathing human beings.

Historically, we have assuaged our fear of the automaton by convinc-

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ing ourselves that we have complete and utter control over it. The automaton can only move at our command by the press of a button or some other control. Hence although we feel unease when observing the automaton, staring into its unblinking eyes, or watching it move in that peculiar spasmodic fashion that our rudimentary science has allowed us to evolve to date, or indeed, listening to it speak from a pre-determined script, we are able to subjugate the fear beneath our laughter by the understanding that automatons exist for our entertainment. Thus in observing them we experience a type of catharsis that is familiar to the reader of generic horror fiction. Our sense of relief when the magic trick of automation is revealed allows us to experience a psychological purging of the repressed emotion of the fear of replication.

The problem posed by the doll is its paradoxical nature. It is at first glance a harmless effigy, a miniature created to amuse and delight children, who will cradle it in their arms and converse with it. The child imposes a kind of anthropomorphism upon the doll, seeing it not as an inanimate object but rather a colleague to be confided in. The adult sees beyond this and appreciates the duplicity embodied in the carapace of the doll. Leonard Wolf spells out this paradox in his collection, *Doubles, Dummies and Dolls: 21 Terror Tales of Reproduction*.

All dolls have two simultaneous and contradictory attributes: First, they are made to resemble us — to look as much alive as possible. And second, they are *not* alive. And that's the point. A doll is simultaneously a metaphor of life and death.... What comes through after the first brief positive response to the doll's features is the revulsion we feel when we know the thing for what it is: an object, cold to the touch: a poor counterfeit of life in whose bright blue orbs we recognize the unfocused fixity of human eyes that have been glazed by death.³

The adoption of the doll as a staple theme in horror fiction arises from its subliminal association with death.

One of the more memorable cinematic examples is presented in the made-for-television horror film *Trilogy of Terror* (1975). In the most impressive installment, *Amelia*, actress Karen Black accidentally re-awakens an ancient Zuni hunting doll. The episode is based on the short story "Prey," by legendary horror writer Richard Matheson. The doll sports a chain around its neck. An attached scroll warns that the chain is to keep the warrior's spirit imprisoned inside the doll from bringing it to life. The

chain is inevitably removed, and the ensuing battle between the two has enough creepy darkened corner or doorway moments to satisfy any horror fan. The concluding scene, when the spirit of the doll possesses the woman, is priceless. This episode was a precursor for a multitude which followed, most memorably the *Child's Play* series, which began in 1988 and continued through the 1990s.

The horror genre is in fact dotted with uncanny, doll-related stories by famous names. The Russian author Anton Chekhov, best known for his plays *The Cherry Orchard* and *Uncle Vanya*, once wrote a disturbing short story about a haunted mirror which has a debilitating effect on any woman who observes herself too closely in it, turning her into an obsessive automaton driven to the point of madness by self-absorption. *The Crooked Mirror* haunts an ancestral home and has the same effect upon the narrator's wife as it did upon his great-grandmother before her: "Once, as I stood behind my wife, I glanced inadvertently into the mirror — and learned a terrible secret. I saw there a woman of such dazzling beauty as I have never before seen in my life, a wonder of nature, a figure of comeliness, grace and love."⁴ Written in the late nineteenth century, perhaps the story was intended as a warning to fashion-conscious ladies not to become enamored of their own reflection, lest they become too doll-like in their quest for perfection. The story is similar to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), except it inverts the theme. In Wilde's famous piece, the picture becomes ever more hideous along with the soul of the protagonist, while his physical beauty remains unflawed.

Another Russian writer from the same era, Leo Tolstoy, also produced an uncanny doll story between literary classics such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. In "The Porcelain Doll," Tolstoy and his wife Sonya co-authored a letter to his wife's younger sister, in which Tolstoy imagines Sonya turning into a small porcelain doll, cold to the touch and in need of protection from shattering. At the time it was written (March 1863), Tolstoy's wife was pregnant. The story may have as its source the fragility of childbirth, or it may be a comment on the effect pregnancy has on the conjugal urge. Perhaps Tolstoy felt it made Sonya as cold and non-responsive as a doll: "I quite lost control of myself, seized her, and tried to take her to her bed. My fingers made no impression on her cold porcelain body, and what surprised me yet more was that she had become as light as an empty flask."⁵

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The Irish-American writer Fitz-James O'Brien's novella *The Wonder-smith* (1859) is a gothic Christmas tale set in contemporary New York. A band of vile Gypsies use dark magic to capture wayward souls and use them to animate an army of grotesque, miniature manikins. They plan to sell the monstrosities as toys to Christian children, who will then be slain in an act of revenge on the Christians for destroying the old Romany culture. While the story might lean too heavily on negative stereotypes, it is nevertheless a wonderfully crafted piece of writing:

The Wondersmith took the little dolls out, one by one, and set them upon the table. Such an array of villainous countenances was never seen.... While Madame Filomel uncorked the black bottle, Herr Hippe covered the dolls over with a species of linen tent.... The fortune teller held the mouth of the bottle to the door of the tent, gathering the loose cloth closely round the glass neck. Immediately, tiny noises were heard inside the tent.... A wonderful transformation had taken place. Wooden and inflexible no longer, the crowd of manikins were now in full motion. The beadlike eyes turned, glittering on all sides; the thin, wicked lips quivered with bad passions; the tiny hands sheathed and unsheathed the little swords and daggers.⁶

As in most instances of this sort of literature, the reanimated dolls have evil intentions. However, in this case, the evil is turned back upon the perpetrators, when the dolls rise up and destroy their creators and are in turn similarly destroyed by the wretched dying Gypsies.

By the early twentieth century, traveling carnivals and circus freak shows had become a staple distraction for American audiences in particular. In the wake of the European automatons and at a time when mass doll production had moved from France and Germany to the United States, contemporary culture was interested in the existence of human oddities. In this milieu perhaps the most controversial film of the twentieth century was produced. Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932) was based on the short story "Spurs" by Tod Robbins, and concerns a circus midget, Hans, who falls in love with a tall fellow performer, the trapeze artist Cleopatra. In doing so he forsakes his fiancée Frieda, a fellow midget. Unbeknownst to Hans, Cleopatra is in love with the circus strongman, Hercules, and she is only using Hans for his wealth. The truth is revealed during a raucous wedding reception, where another dwarf jumps on the table and passes a goblet of wine around, exhorting all the performers to drink and become "one of us." As the midgets set up a rhythmic chant and bang on the tables,

Cleopatra is overcome with revulsion and reveals her true feelings when she pushes the goblet away from her lips and unleashes a volume of abuse at the “dirty slimy freaks.” Soon after, when Hans realizes that Cleopatra and Hercules are trying to poison him, the freaks plot their revenge (“offend one and you offend them all” was a catch-phrase from the film). In a striking scene as the traveling wagons are disabled in a thunderstorm, we see the freaks scrabbling through the mud and the rain, some bearing knives between their teeth. A scream is heard and we cut to another circus setting, where a barker stands before a veiled exhibit. He informs a curious crowd of onlookers that nobody knows how the freak he is about to reveal got the way she did. Then we see Cleopatra’s head on the body of a chicken.

Browning and the MGM studio took a huge gamble in making the freaks the heroes of his film, and it would backfire on the studio. The audiences of 1932 could not accept human oddities as anything other than horrific representations of the uncanny. The film was banned in Britain for thirty years and it got mixed audience reactions across the States. The studio was forced to tack a happy ending on the end of the film where the midget couple is reconciled. To cast the eponymous “freaks” of the traveling circus, Browning hired a range of people who had achieved notoriety in the circus world. Among them were two members of the Doll family, a quartet who had emigrated from Germany to the States and whose real name was Schneider. Harry and Daisy played the two lead roles in the film. Also cast were Prince Randian the Hindu Living Torso; Daisy and Violet Hilton, the Siamese Twins; Joseph-Josephine, the Bearded Woman; Johnny Eck, the Boy with Half a Body; Kookoo the Bird Girl; Peter Robinson, the Human Skeleton; and a whole troop of microcephalics, unfortunates suffering from a physical deformity which makes the skull appear shrunken and cone-shaped, colloquially known as pinheads.

In a chapter on the history of the Doll (Schneider) family in her book, *Living Dolls*, Gaby Wood recalls how contemporary posters for the film focused on the prurient sexual aspect of the oddities. “Can a fully grown woman truly love a midget? What is the sex of the half man half woman? Do Siamese twins make love?” The majority of the performers were refused permission to eat at the MGM cafeteria because too many people complained. One woman even tried to sue the studio because the film allegedly caused her to miscarry. In those more ignorant times, people with defor-

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mities were grouped with dolls, machines and robots as sinister outsiders or at best, curiosities:

As the cultural critic Susan Stewart has put it, “The freak of nature is always a freak of culture.” Freaks were not born to be on display; they were cast into the realm of curiosity by those who saw them. Just as the doll is a focus for human projection — “the gruesome foreign body,” as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke put it, “on which we squandered our purest affection” — for the audience, the sideshow midget is more imagined than real. The human spectacle is all about possibility, and not at all about authenticity.⁷

It is telling that the film is also known by several other titles used to sell it in different markets: *Forbidden Love*, *Nature's Mistakes*, and *The Monster Show*.

The ventriloquist's dummy is another common horror trope and another reminder of the uncanny ability of anthropomorphism to create doubt in the mind over the sanctity of the human condition. The dummy makes us stop and wonder who is controlling who, and the terror we feel stems from the ambiguous nature of the relationship. As Leonard Wolf states:

The dummy engages us more complexly than the doll because the dummy has a symbiotic relationship with the ventriloquist. It shares with him a co-dependency and therefore is especially intriguing. The dummy without the ventriloquist is merely a large sized doll. The ventriloquist without the dummy is a linguistic aberration. To achieve his definition, to be a ventriloquist, he has to infuse his voice into the humanoid object on his lap. Which means that, at any moment when the act is on, we appear to be watching two people in a relationship that always feels intimate — and therefore complex.⁸

A recent film on the subject and one which features a powerful, controlling female protagonist is *Dead Silence* (2007), brought to us by the people behind the more commercially successful *Saw* franchise. In the town of Ravens Fair in the 1940s, Mary Shaw is an exceptionally creepy-looking ventriloquist whose lifelong desire is to create the perfect doll. Unfortunately she has to murder one of the local children to do it, a boy who questions her abilities during one of her performances. Although the boy is never found, the townsfolk suspect Mary and violently turn on her. They cut her throat and bury her along with her ornate collection of dummies. In subsequent years, those responsible for her murder and their descendents are themselves mysteriously slain, with their tongues cut out and their faces disfigured to look like ventriloquist's dolls. We segue to the

present day, where a young man (Jamie Ashen) whose family came from Ravens Fair finds his wife mysteriously murdered in the same manner, shortly after receiving an old dummy in an unmarked package. Jamie returns to Ravens Fair to try to decipher the mystery. He visits the derelict theater and the haunted lair of Mary Shaw and discovers her dark secrets. However, the ghost of the evil ventriloquist and her demonic dolls have a few nasty surprises in store for Jamie. Perhaps the most unnerving scene in the film occurs when Jamie examines the dead ventriloquist's secret quarters and finds her designs for creating the perfect dummy, and, thereafter, the remains of the murdered child, hung from the rafters by a series of strings.

The element of suspense in the ventriloquist tale results from the doubt in the mind of the observer as to who is in control of the relationship, the ventriloquist or the dummy. In nearly every instance, the dummy has an uncanny hold over the puppet master. It is the transmutation of souls that we find so disturbing. This motif is ably demonstrated in another classic horror tale, Gerald Kersh's *The Extraordinarily Horrible Dummy* (1944), in which a famous ventriloquist (Echo) confesses to a fellow performer that his dummy, Mickey, is in fact possessed by the spirit of his overbearing father, a man who would drive the young Echo to despair by his lack of belief in the boy's abilities. Echo confesses to his colleague that his late father has returned to haunt him through the dummy, which forces him to practice his art to the point of exhaustion. The colleague tries to pacify Echo and simultaneously convince himself that Echo's fears are merely a result of the stress of overwork — until he hears the shrill voice of Mickey calling to Echo from another room. The tagline from another film on a similar theme, director Richard Attenborough's *Magic* (1978, from the novel of the same name by William Goldman) says, "Abracadabra, I sit on his knee. Presto change, and now he is me." Ultimately the schizophrenic element, the fear that the doll is really alive and channeling a spirit from another realm, works its peculiar form of discord on the reader.

The Doll Motif in Sexual Horror

As the twentieth century progressed, more writers began to align the fear of dolls with a kind of disturbing sexuality. We begin to recognize the

doll not only as a threat to our general sense of well-being, but rather as a specific threat to masculinity. Here the notion of vagina dentata comes to the fore, as female sexuality threatens castration. A salient example of the theme is illustrated in the Ramsey Campbell story "Cyril" (1968), in which a free-spirited but emotionally unfulfilled woman named Flora lures a timid young man (Lance) from her office to her apartment with the intention of seducing him. On his arrival, the introverted Lance gives Flora the gift of a small male doll. She intimates that it reminds her of the child she has craved maternally, but also that she would like to dominate it. Calling the doll Cyril, she puts it to bed in her room. After stalling Lance's departure long enough to cause him to miss his last bus home, where he lives with his widowed mother, Flora convinces him to spend the night on her front room couch. Like the doll before, she tucks Lance into bed and resists the unladylike urge to leap upon him and ravish him.

She becomes angry and frustrated by his lack of initiative and as he sleeps in her front room she lies in her bed fantasizing about what a meaningful relationship would bring to her otherwise empty life, if only she could draw Lance out of his shell. As she drowzes she feels someone pulling at the bed sheets and beginning to caress her intimately. Thinking it is Lance she withdraws beneath the covers and lets him proceed, not wanting to scare him away with her appetites. Then, tentatively feeling the face of her seducer, she recoils in horror as she realizes it is the doll and not Lance that is touching her. Flora is simultaneously terrified and aroused, unsure as to whether her own perverse desires have animated the doll or whether it has somehow become animated as a sexual surrogate, enacting the hidden desires of the man who bestowed it upon her. In a panic she throws the doll into the open fire, and as it slowly melts and dissolves in upon itself, she hears the screams from the front room.⁹

Dolls are a common trope for Campbell in his horror musings. In his collection *Scared Stiff: Tales of Sex and Death*, the story "Dolls" concerns John Norton, an eighteenth century furniture maker and member of a coven. He carves wooden voodoo dolls which are used to strike at his enemies and to further the sexual rituals of the group. The persona of John becomes transmogrified with that of an ornate image of the devil he has crafted. It appears to the coven, animated and larger than life, striding out of the woods soon after John disappears into them. The devil avails itself of the coven's women, impaling them on its massive carved penis. In the

conclusion to the story, the devil takes John's wife Anne both anally and vaginally, first willingly then against her will:

She was so furious at the deception, furious with herself for having responded to this dummy, for having even feared for its life, that she gave herself no chance to wonder how it had been made to move. She turned on the devil, lying on its back next to her. She wrenched at its brandished penis. It was a shaft of young wood carefully pared to smoothness. As she twisted it violently, it turned in the socket and came away in her hand.¹⁰

There is suspicion among the coven that John may be inside the wooden figure of the devil, but when the wooden dummy has its arm chopped off and is emasculated, John is found nearby in a pool of blood, his arm and penis savagely torn off.

In "Lilith's" from the same collection, a repressed, sexually inhibited man named Palin purchases a love doll he sees in the window of the mysterious shop of the title, which has a bizarre impact on his subsequent behavior. He sinks into sexual obsession with the doll, which seems so much more willing and submissive than his awkward girlfriend. Forsaking the girlfriend for the faceless doll, Palin transposes the features of the mysterious shop proprietor, presumably the Lilith of the title, onto it, and finds this gives him an immediate erection:

It wasn't like Emily's slick ridges, sometimes rough. He didn't have to thrust. It gave softly as he slid in; it felt like velvet. It seemed to ripple back over the shaft of his penis, kissing each nerve. As his crotch touched hers her legs closed softly, warmly over his back ... she waited. He could take as long as he liked, move her any way he wanted.¹¹

However, when the shop burns down and is destroyed, taking Lilith with it, the relationship with the doll sours. Palin starts to resent the doll's imagined demands for his attention. He begins to argue with it, its lack of response to his complaints further angering him. It is as if Lilith were some kind of succubus, her persona now transposed into the figure of the doll. In a fit of pique, Palin partly disfigures the doll and throws it in the trash. The next morning, after a detailed erotic dream, he awakens with a scream to find himself erect and impaled inside the doll, its thighs clamped hard around him. The story is largely concerned with male sexual and emotional ignorance, and the inability some men to relate to women as human beings. The character of Palin as a socially inadequate, introverted man is perceptively crafted.

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The legendary Robert Bloch, author of *Psycho*, also wrote a short story on the theme of vagina dentata. In his tale “The Model,” Bloch paints models as a strange and monstrous alien race, eerily similar in attitude and physical make up, feeding upon men in a sexually voracious manner as they symbolically emasculate them. In this story, a womanizing playboy is undone by a fashion model seductress who plays hard to get. When she does finally acquiesce and removes her own head, he truly wishes she hadn’t:

Then the dress fell and there was my answer, moving toward me. Bending over me on the bed, with her tiny breasts almost directly above my face so that I could see the hard tips budding. Budding and opening until the eyes peered out — the *real* eyes, green and glittering deep within the nipples.... I watched her belly rise and fall, felt the warm, panting breath from her navel. The last thing I saw was what lay below — the pink lipped, bearded mouth, opening to engulf me.¹²

The tale is told second-hand to an anonymous protagonist employed in an asylum where the “victim” is housed. At the conclusion of the tale we learn that the model of the title had disappeared never to be seen again after the events described, and the asylum patient was found lying in bed in a pool of his own blood, minus his genitalia.

A story on a similar theme, but which employs a skeletal female instead of a doll is “Aphra,” by American horror writer Nancy A. Collins. Her male protagonist, Reg, is sexually excited by skeletal, emaciated females and actual female skeletons from a young age. He recalls how he once purchased a pair of X-ray specs from an advertisement in a comic book on the premise that they would allow him to see not through a woman’s clothes, but through her skin to her bones. Sneaking a look at his father’s old college anatomy textbook he finds “there were plenty of pictures showing flayed women, their faces peeled and organs coiled. But their exposed muscles and yellow layers of subcutaneous fat were far too ‘gooshy.’ I much preferred the hard, sharp angles hidden at the core of the human machine. There was something about the perfection of bone that made my palms sweat and my head hurt.”¹³ Reg’s abhorrent sexual fascination grows stronger until one day he finds a full sized female skeleton in a garage sale, and excitedly hides her in his study. As time passes he begins to find all living women, including his wife, morbidly obese and disgusting. His growing desire for Aphra, his secret skeleton, is unrequited but burns ever stronger within him until one night she comes to life and

seduces him in the bed he has set up in his study to avoid his wife. The wife finds them together and leaves him. From that point on, Reg slowly withdraws from the real world and slides ever deeper into his dark fantasy world with Aphra, refusing to leave the house or eat as he gradually wastes away and attains the perfection of bone — like his eternal lover.

Another tale which uses a sex doll as the main progenitor of the horror motif is Australian writer Sean Williams's "The Girl Thing" (originally published in *Eidolon Online* in November 2002). This is an inventive retelling of the Frankenstein narrative with an inflatable doll as its central player and is essentially a pulp thriller based around two police officers looking for a rampant serial killer with the red herring of a stolen sex doll threatening to distract them. The main protagonist, thirty-something Senior Constable Weylin Hollister, wrestles with his conscience and the fresh memories of his wife's death, sensing that she has something to do with the mysterious goings-on in the decidedly noir world of Amberley Park. This fictional suburb is a nether world populated by sleazy sex shops, junkies, teenage hookers, abandoned buildings and the living dead, in the person of street denizens, the forgotten detritus of the modern world. These forlorn characters and the dead world they inhabit, so drained of vitality, are colorfully drawn by the author. "This city is riddled with old spaces no one cares about anymore." The hobos merge into their landscape and Hollister and his partner Jane Moir must pry them from their surroundings to ascertain the truth.

Hollister is disturbed by nocturnal conversations with his wife Arna, which are structured early in the piece as bedside chat between married people. The use of the disembodied voice of Arna is a clever device. It is a genuine shock when the reader learns she is actually dead. Hollister is chasing a shadow, the main suspect in the stolen sex doll case, an old street dweller known colloquially as Jellyhead. He realizes he is onto something when he finds the words whispered to him deep in the night by Arna mirrored in the insane ramblings of the old man. Tracing Jellyhead through his only living confidante, the naive but compassionate social worker Cloe Flavell, Hollister begins to unravel the mystery. Jellyhead's underground lair beneath an abandoned train station contains the missing sex doll. When his satchel reveals a collection of sealed bags containing used tampons, feces, urine, hair, nail clippings and dead skin cells, the detectives realize they are being drawn into a world of voodoo and possible ritualistic

sacrifice. Hollister pursues Jellyhead to his lair, only to find the old man and Cloe Flavell dead, the latter slaughtered and missing several bones, including her jawbone. "He'll need the bones before he's done," Arna had prophesied about the man who would channel her return from the world of the dead to the living. Hollister reflects on the words spoken by Cloe Flavell about people like Jellyhead, the forlorn and forgotten, the invisible people. "There are people who like to think of them as our last surviving mystics: dreamers who don't fit into modern society, reviled channelers permanently in contact with realms we can no longer experience." Eventually Hollister is confronted by his returning wife Arna in the form of the re-animated sex doll. She has come back to him. Williams excels with a well-drawn world of voodoo, despair and darkness, a world where the light fails to penetrate. He also shines with a most interesting use of a sex doll as a homunculus and a metaphor for eternal life.

Evil Gynoids and the Immorality of Female Sexuality

The personification of evil embodied in the form of the gynoid is another common trope in the horror and science fiction genres. This symbiotic relationship is ably illustrated in two early literary examples of doll-related horror fiction. E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1816) concerns a young male protagonist, Nathaniel, who loses the ability to differentiate between a real and an artificial woman. He forsakes his human lover Clara for the gynoid Olimpia, the supposed "daughter" of his physics professor, Spalanzani, who is said to keep her locked away from any man. Finding himself housed at college next door to the professor's rooms, Nathaniel voyeuristically spies through a window on Olimpia using an eyeglass. His desire for the unattainable and mysterious Olimpia becomes an obsession, her artificiality apparent to everyone but him. Nathaniel is overjoyed when Spalanzani announces he will host a ball and allow young men to meet his mysterious, reclusive daughter. Nathaniel monopolizes Olimpia all evening, engaging her in small talk, mistaking her inconclusive responses for shyness. He dances with her at length, confusing her mechanical responses for grace. When he eventually realizes his mistake and acknowledges that he has fallen in love with an automaton, he is driven mad by the revelation and kills himself. In fact, Hoffman himself was intrigued by the social fas-

cination with automatons prevalent in Renaissance Europe. He was well-versed in the subject and had written an earlier story called "The Automata" (1814), which featured a machine similar to Kempelen's chess player, but which also exhibited psychic powers. In a precursor to the events which unfold in *The Sandman*, one of the characters remarks on the sheer horror evoked by the thought of a living man dancing with a lifeless mechanical partner, ignorant of the fact.¹⁴

In Villiers de L'Isle Adam's novel *L'Eve Future* (*The Eve of the Future*, 1886), Lord Ewald, an English aristocrat, is embroiled in a tumultuous love affair with Miss Alicia Clary, a young lady of difficult disposition and a querulous nature. Feeling suicidal over what he perceives as Alicia's lack of compassion, Lord Ewald confides in his friend Thomas Edison, the American inventor. It transpires that Edison is in the process of creating a gynoid, and seeks a likeness on which to mold its image. Hearing Lord Ewald's tale of despair, Edison offers to make the gynoid in the image of Alicia Clary. The pair deceive Alicia into modeling for a sculpture and allowing them to capture the sound of her voice, which Edison records on his phonograph. The gynoid is created in Alicia's image and named Hadaly (meaning "ideal" in Persian). Subsequently, thinking himself conversing with the real Alicia, Lord Ewald expresses his love for her and is surprised by her emotive, tearful and deferential response. Yet unbeknownst to him it is in fact Hadaly who has responded to his love. When Edison reveals the truth, Lord Ewald confesses that the gynoid was able to evoke in him a depth of passion that no living woman ever could. Thus he relates to the submissive gynoid more favorably than to the spirited, uncontrollable woman. The tale ends tragically when Lord Ewald, Alicia Clary and Hadaly travel back



French writer Villiers de l'Isle Adam was the author of one of the earliest novels about a man falling in love with a gynoid, *L'Eve Future* (*The Eve of the Future*, 1886).

to England on an ocean liner which sinks, taking the girl and the gynoid to a watery grave. A distraught Lord Ewald writes to Edison before taking his own life, confessing that "My friend, only the loss of Hadaly leaves me inconsolable — I grieve only for that shade. Farewell!"¹⁵ In both of these examples, the common theme is the ease with which the male protagonists are duped by an automaton which appears to them more real than the biological woman it is modeled on.

The role of Edison in the latter text is quite interesting. As Gaby Wood notes, Adam transforms the American inventor into a kind of alchemist, possessor of an underground laboratory outside of the world of the living:

Via a process of "transubstantiation," he will separate Alicia's body from her soul, and in twenty-one days time, he tells Ewald, "at the same hour, in this very spot, Miss Alicia Clary will appear to you, not merely transfigured ... but dressed in a kind of immortality. [She] will no longer be a woman, she will be an angel: she will not be a mistress but a lover; no longer Reality, but the Ideal." (16)

There are elements of the Prometheus myth in this story, as well as a tip of the hat to Faust and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The common theme which binds them is man's attempt to usurp God by outdoing his creation. The unfortunate result of this meddling with creation is to bring about man's downfall.

Another nineteenth century novel with a similar theme, if a more positive outcome, is the pornographic story penned by the anonymous "Madam B." (possibly a male author), "La Femme Endormie" (The Benumbed Woman, 1899). Remarkably similar in construction to de L'Isle Adam's *The Eve of the Future* (in fact it may be a parody of it),¹⁷ the plot revolves around a successful, middle-aged man, Paul Molaus, who grows bored with the ministrations of his mistresses and fantasizes about creating his own perfect woman. After considering purchasing a marble statue, he instead commissions an artist, Anastasius, to create for him a mechanical gynoid. Much like Lord Ewald before him, on setting eyes on his ideal woman, Molaus is struck down by a maddening desire, although in this case the subsequent expression of carnal lust is very physically expressed. The narrative continues with Molaus vowing to marry the gynoid, which he names Mea. The doll is also physically possessed by her creator, Anastasius, who finds himself equally unable to resist her. As is common in

pornographic literature, when Molaus discovers Mea's "infidelity," it only increases his desire to have sex with her. In fact the two men decide to enjoy her simultaneously. They are subsequently joined in the tryst quite willingly by Lucile, a dressmaker whom Molaus hires to make Mea's wedding dress. Lucile proclaims Mea to be superior to herself, and she happily joins the two male protagonists in an orgiastic relationship with the doll. If anything this story reflects the growing fear of the eroticized female body, female emancipation and sexuality. It is yet another expression of an innate masculine desire to construct a submissive woman who can be controlled.

The theme of the gynoid as a threat to man's sanity and sense of order is also utilized in Fritz Lang's epic silent film *Metropolis* (1927). It was written in collaboration with his wife, the science fiction writer Thea von Harbou, and based on her earlier novel of the same name. The film is essentially a socialist critique of the opposition between the poor and the wealthy and between good and evil, centered around the desire to find some middle ground to bring the two together. As Lang himself put it in a contemporary interview, "The mediator between the brain (capital) and the hands (working class or labour) must be the heart."¹⁸ There is no middle ground in Lang's vision of a city set far in the future, where the rich live in palaces above the ground and enjoy a life of sheer luxury, while the faceless poor live and work underground in the vast machine that is the Metropolis, toiling in unison like automatons under the cruel oligarch Joh Fredersen. Fredersen orders his chief scientist Rotwang to create an android to work the machines for him, because the men are unreliable, needing rest, and their bodies break down.

However, instead of a male android, Rotwang creates a gynoid, whom he calls Hel, after the long-lost love of his life. The original Hel was in fact the wife of Joh Fredersen. She had forsaken Rotwang for him, and died in childbirth, leaving Joh with his only son, Freder. Hel is described as the perfect woman, kind-hearted and angelic. Freder has some of the same qualities. As Rotwang is revealing his creation to an astounded Joh, Freder is equally astonished by Maria, one of the workers' daughters, herself a vision of angelic beauty with a kind heart. She will become the mediating force between the brain and the hands, the overlords and the workers. Freder leaves his pampered surroundings, pursues Maria to the underworld and finds a world he never knew existed. Maria holds a secret meeting

where she urges the workers not to revolt against the city, promising them that a mediator will appear to bring harmony to their world. The meeting is observed by Freder and also by Joh and Rotwang, who are amazed to discover that Maria is the spitting image of their lost love, Hel. Joh orders Rotwang to give the gynoid Maria's features, so he can use it to control the workers. Maria is duly captured and the transformation takes place in Rotwang's laboratory in a scene reminiscent of Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The gynoid Maria seduces the workers into a revolt (told through the metaphor of dance) against the machines by stirring up their sexual passions. Unfortunately, in destroying the machines, the workers unwittingly destroy their homes by unleashing a deluge of water from an underground river, which in turn threatens to drown their children. When they realize what they have done, the workers turn on the real Maria, who has escaped from Rotwang's laboratory, and chase her. At that point, another mob of workers appear, carrying the gynoid Maria triumphally on their shoulders. When they, too, are enlightened, the workers tie the gynoid to a stake and burn her as a witch. They are duly appalled when the flesh peels off to reveal the robot underneath. The gynoid defies and taunts them through the flames. Meanwhile Freder and Rotwang fight over the real Maria in the cathedral, and the latter is thrown off the roof to his doom. Maria then fulfils the unification prophecy by uniting the foreman of the workers and Joh Fredersen in a handshake via Freder.

The film presents an interesting use of the mother/whore dichotomy. It is interesting that Lang and von Harbou chose a female robot to bring about chaos and destruction. One possible interpretation is that the character Rotwang gives birth to the gynoid in the image of his dead lover in order to usurp the natural biological function of woman and replace it with science and thereby constrain it under masculine control. Whereas before she had forsaken him and then escaped him via death, by reconstructing her as a gynoid, Rotwang assumes he will never lose her again.¹⁹ The story is similar in construct to the biblical tale of the fall of Adam and Eve through Eve's duplicity. A contemporary review in *The New York Times* was as scathing of the worldview the film portrayed as it was of the gynoid Hel: "It is a technical marvel with feet of clay, a picture as soulless as the manufactured woman of its story."²⁰ The consistent theme running through the narrative is that of binary opposites — labor and capital, good and evil, and most significantly, the nurturing mother and the destructive

whore. Female sexuality as exhibited by the gynoid is portrayed as chaotic and destructive to the work ethic and social stability, deliberately stirring up base desires in men. This is contrasted with the nurturing qualities of the mother, good-hearted, angelic, beatific, patient, passive, and nurturing, her sexuality completely restrained.

A much later film with similar Biblical connotations and which also utilizes the mother/whore dichotomy is the 1991 picture *Eve of Destruction*, in which a gynoid with a built-in nuclear charge threatens mass destruction when it malfunctions, expressing one of the great emasculating fears of the science fiction genre. Jon Stratton discusses the film at length in his book, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*. "At the same time that the gynoid expresses the possibility of a fulfilment of male desire, its very phallicness presents it to men as a source of fear, fear that it will become active and threaten to destroy its male creators."²¹ Eve VIII is a gynoid commissioned by the American government as a weapon of mass destruction. Its creator and namesake is Eve, a senior robotics engineer in the American defense forces. The gynoid is made in Eve's image and is therefore her double. During the course of a routine assignment, Eve VIII is shot by a bank robber, causing the gynoid to malfunction and turn its aggression upon its creators. Armed with a nuclear device where its womb would be, Eve VIII threatens to give birth to chaos by destroying the sense of order imposed on society by the armed forces in their role as protectors of the state. Simultaneously we learn that the real Eve is in her thirties and separated from her husband, who is the sole caretaker of their son. She is also estranged from her alcoholic (and possibly abusive) father due to a horrific childhood incident when he threw her mother in front of an oncoming car and killed her. The gynoid Eve then carries out the desires that the real Eve had suppressed in order to fit into her male-dominated surroundings. Presumably, the gynoid Eve has been programmed to share the memories of her creator, specifically the violent, negative emotions that the real Eve has successfully buried. The gynoid hunts down Eve's father and kills him. It traces Eve's estranged husband and retrieves (or kidnaps) her son. When all attempts by the male-dominated state to bring Eve VIII down are unsuccessful, Eve herself shoots the gynoid through her one vulnerable spot, the eye, and "kills" her. Thus the armed and threatening gynoid is subjugated by the good, nurturing woman, who simultaneously remains subservient to the needs

of the state, and the threat of the emasculation of the masculine social order is averted.

The doppelganger (German for "double walker") is a mythological shadow of the self which is often used as a subject in horror fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is perhaps the most famous example of the theme. A more recent cinematic portrayal of the doppelganger as a specific female psycho-sexual threat occurs in the 1993 film *Doppelganger*. Drew Barrymore plays a young woman, Holly Gooding, who flees from New York to Los Angeles following the fatal stabbing of her mother, a murder which she may or may not have committed. She applies to rent a room advertised by a young man, Patrick, and soon becomes his lover. It transpires that Holly is being stalked by her own doppelganger, a demonic creature bent on a path of murderous destruction. Holly's attitude to the supposed existence of her doppelganger is ambivalent, so that confusion ensues as to how innocent she actually is. The viewer is consequently unsure if the doppelganger actually exists as an evil twin, if it is in fact Holly who is the sexual predator and killer all along, or indeed if there is a symbiotic relationship between the two, with Holly guiding the evil twin on its path of destruction. Most significantly, the film emphasizes the negative connotations of female sexuality and reinforces the myth of vamp as a threat to the masculine social order.

Several episodes of the original *Twilight Zone* television series (1959–64) concerned human interaction with gynoids as objects of desire and repulsion. One of the earliest and the most uncanny was "The Lonely" (Season 1, Episode 7, aired on November 13, 1959), a tale set in the year 2046 in which fugitives from Earth are marooned in solitude on remote desert planets. One such prisoner, James Corry, is dying of loneliness after many years in isolation, his only solace an occasional visit by a supply ship from Earth. Allenby, the humane captain of this ship, is in the habit of bringing Corry items to take his mind off his loneliness. On one such visit, he leaves behind a large crate, and bids Corry not to open it until the ship leaves. To his amazement, Corry finds the crate contains a life-sized gynoid named Alicia. She is to be his companion. At first Corry bitterly rejects her as a soulless piece of machinery, but when he sees her cry as a result of his cruelty, his heart softens and he begins to accept her. Eventually, Corry falls in love with her and they become inseparable. However, the supply ship returns unexpectedly, and Allenby informs Corry

that a review of his case has brought him a full pardon, and he can return to Earth immediately. Corry's joy is shattered when he learns that he can only take 15 pounds of luggage with him, not nearly enough allowance for his gynoid soul mate. Corry argues Alicia's case bitterly, insisting that she is a real woman and not just a robot. In a shocking ending, Allenby draws his gun and shoots Alicia in the face. She immediately malfunctions as her circuitry is revealed. This seems to release Corry from the hold the gynoid had over him. Allenby leads a stunned Corry back to the ship, reminding him that he is not leaving behind his lover, but only solitude. Alicia is after all, just a piece of machinery he used to assuage his loneliness.

Final mention in this brief synopsis of evil gynoids goes to Eric Shapiro's 2006 novella *Days of Allison*, a horrific tale set in the near future. The story is centered on a weedy social inadequate named Louis, whose overbearing mother so despairs of his lack of initiative and guile that she is forced to purchase a robotic companion for him. The robot Allison, known as a "RealMate," is designed to give Louis the love and companionship he is missing. However, there is something amiss in Allison's wiring and she soon begins to abandon her programming, and to express individual opinions and abhorrent desires of her own. She spits, swears and has sex with his elderly next-door neighbor. After initially considering sending her back to the company that produced her for reprogramming, Louis decides he rather likes the new, "evil" Allison, and decides to keep her, with some unpleasant consequences.

Subjugating Fear with Desire

Western culture and its literature and cinema has long had an innate suspicion of robots and any form of artificial life. This mistrust dates to the dawn of the industrial revolution and the creation of large-scale machinery, which coincided with the invention of the first automatons. These replications of humanity were able, by a form of rudimentary mechanization, to perform a few elementary tasks often taken for granted by humans. Yet as the industrial revolution gathered force, so people came to associate the rise of machinery as a threat to social order. Work and the workplace ordered society. Industrialization gave employment to many,

but at the same time, mass production put craftsmen out of work. So while industrialization and automation elicited feelings of awe at the benefits of progress, it simultaneously evoked feelings of resentment, which found expression in contemporary works of fiction.

Andreas Huyssen comments in his book *After the Great Divide*: "Literature appropriates the subject matter transforming it significantly. The android is no longer seen as testimony to the genius of mechanical invention: it rather becomes a nightmare, a threat to human life."²²

The long-standing fear embodied in androids is that they are physically superior in every way to human beings and that, if they are able to develop individual emotion and increase in numbers, androids could take over the world. This phobia saw its first airing in the public consciousness in a stage play written by Czechoslovakian author Karel Čapek in 1922, *Rossum's Universal Robots*. Indeed the term "robot" was first conceived by Karel's brother Josef prior to his writing of the play. It is derived from the Czech term *robota*, meaning forced labor.²³ In the play, the robots of the title are humanoid in appearance, and designed to work as slaves to the men who created them. This changes when a scientist endows the robots with emotions, and as a result they grow resentful at their mistreatment, and rise up to revolt against their makers and against humanity in total. In his book *Love + Sex with Robots*, David Levy suggests that the great science fiction writer Isaac Asimov reacted to the increasing numbers of books in the genre about robots who kill humans. Asimov drafted his now-famous "Laws of Robotics," which were first aired in his 1942 short story "Runaround" and most recently popularized in the 2004 film adaptation of his short story collection *I Robot*.

Asimov's laws of robotics—1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. 2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law. He later added the Zeroth Law: A robot may not injure humanity, or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm.²⁴

At the same time, authors of new fictional works on androids and machines seemed to prefer female robots, gynoids, over androids. Huyssen argues that this is a reflection of the growing contemporary influence of the writings of Sigmund Freud, in particular the male apprehension over

female sexuality and the castration complex. This argument is developed by Stratton in *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*, in which he argues that the Freudian fetish, a woman's perceived lack of the phallus, simultaneously produces great desirability and the capacity to induce fear. Thus the great industrial machines, with phallic symbols like repetitive thrusting pistons, were both feared and desired as a source of masculine power. The gynoid took on an image of insatiable and devouring predatory female sexuality:

The gynoid's life as a dead spectacle comes from the libidinal charge of its fetishisation. Manufactured by men, the production of the gynoid literalises the fetishistic reconstruction of the female body.... As an oftentimes indistinguishable or even improved upon substitute for a woman, the gynoid retains the sexual quality as a woman of being an object of heterosexual male desire whilst, in addition, being the site of an overdetermining fetishistic desire.²⁵



Isaac Asimov (1965) was the creator of the "Three Laws of Robotics" in the science fiction genre.

Thus by subsuming into desire their fear of castration or emasculation by a mythic powerful woman, men hope to be able to tame and control their anxiety.

In the canon of western science fiction and horror fiction, gynoids are divided between those which are sexual predators and those which are passive and subjugated to male desire. The commonality between them is that despite the illusion of control, the subliminal fear of predatory female sexuality always remains a threat to masculine social order. This is demonstrated in the 1975 feature film *The Stepford Wives*, adapted from the novel of the same name written by Ira Levin in 1972, and discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The soulless, insipid gynoids of the story reflect the

“perfect woman” as personified in the sex doll. Disagreement, individuality, disobedience (and its implied threat of emasculation) are removed from the Stepford world. These elements are personified in the film by Bobbie Markowe, an avowed feminist, who enlists a willing Joanna in her quest to get the women of Stepford interested in the contemporary women’s liberation movement. The story is heavily influenced by the era in which it was written, when the women’s movement was making strides in liberating women from the stereotypes of a male-dominated society.

On another level, the gynoids of *The Stepford Wives* are like the robots of Čapek’s *Rossum’s Universal Robots*. In both, their creators design them without emotion. The capacity for individual thought threatens to usurp the established order. This is a theme which has been endlessly explored in fiction over the past several hundred years. It is for example, the main plot catalyst in Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and the subsequent film adaptation *Bladerunner*. The socially unacceptable love between Dekkard and the replicant Rachel calls into question what it is to be human. Rachel is so readily able to replicate the emotions of a human being that not only is she not discernable from a living, breathing woman, she actually believes that she is human, as is evinced when she undertakes an “empathy test” under Dekkard’s control. This element of the story is actually loosely based on a genuine occurrence. In 1950 the mathematician Alan Turing devised what he termed an “imitation game” called the Turing test. A human being and a computer were placed in separate rooms and asked to respond to a series of questions put to them by a moderator. Their responses would appear on a screen. The object for both participants was to prove to the moderator that they were human. The aim for the computer was to make its responses indistinguishable from those of a human. So far, no computer has ever passed the test.²⁶

The Emotional Machine

Since the dawn of the age of the automaton in Renaissance Europe, philosophers, physicians, alchemists, scientists, futurists and science fiction writers have considered the issues of ethics and morality in relation to autonomous android life. We are often reminded of this in literature and film. Texts like *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *I Robot*, and *A.I.* draw our atten-

tion to the possibility of machines developing an emotional capacity and bridging the gap which separates the biological from the mechanical. It is this absence of humanity that Freud alluded to in his notes on the uncanny. It is this ineluctable association between stillness and death in the doll that links it to our deepest fears. If technology can ever cross this bridge, and somehow merge the unreal with the real, the artificial with biological flesh, the result would be both a miracle and a nightmare.

One of the major concerns of Renaissance Europe with the concept of artificial life was that the android was not a living creature and therefore, could not have a soul. In a Europe dominated by the church and its teachings, this could only mean that a being without a soul would be preternaturally evil, or at least predisposed to commit acts of evil. Some of the philosophers of the enlightenment placed themselves at odds with the prevailing authorities (predominantly the Pope in Rome) with their musings on men, machines and the concept of the soul. Rene Descartes tried to suppress his "Treatise on Man" in his only published work, *The World*, because he feared recrimination over his assertion that man was a kind of machine. In anatomical terms, the human body functions like a machine and its workings seem to proceed automatically, without thought. It has an automatic drive to function that is separate from the notion of a soul to guide it. By this reckoning, man is akin to the beasts of the field. The heart pumps blood around the body. Descartes recognized the similarity between vital organs and the cogs and pistons which drive basic machinery. This idea was taken up by the physician Julien de La Mettrie, whose book *The Natural History of the Soul* was considered so heretical that all the copies were rounded up and publicly burned. As a result of this, de La Mettrie fled from France to the safety of Holland, and his next work, *Man A Machine* (1747), was published anonymously. Unfortunately the style and subject were recognizable. He was discovered by the church officials and most copies were also burned. Even more than Descartes, de La Mettrie considered man to be little more than a highly complex machine, and he defiantly espoused his ideas in the face of Papal hostility. "La Mettrie argues that man was an automaton ... a self-winding machine, a living representation of perpetual motion.... The soul [is] nothing more than an empty word to which no idea corresponds; it should never be used to mean a source of life, but only to mean the mind, to name the part in us that thinks."²⁷

THE SEX DOLL

Interestingly, the same arguments come to the fore again in the age of cyber technology, as the concept of a fully functioning android draws ever nearer to reality. At the same time, the verisimilitude of these twenty-first-century automatons makes them appear ever more lifelike, so that the old anxiety over being able to differentiate between the real and the artificial re-emerges in a number of recent texts.

It is a question taken up by David Levy in his book *Love + Sex with Robots*. Starting with the premise that love and sex with robots is an inevitable progression in human adaptation, Levy acknowledges the psychological impasse in western society which has its basis in the uncanny of psychology and literature: "In Western books and movies, robots are often a threat, either because they are manipulated by sinister forces or because something goes horribly wrong with them."²⁸ Levy goes on to expound in careful detail his theory that human beings will gradually

come to accept robots as colleagues, friends, lovers and even as spouses. He asserts that humans will be falling in love with and marrying robots by the year 2050.²⁹ It is a highly contentious argument even from the social viewpoint of the early twenty-first century, for, as sophisticated as our technology is, we still appear to be a long way from creating a functional android. Even creating an android with the ability to move realistically of its own accord is currently beyond our reach, but not for much longer at the rate technology is progressing. Moreover, Levy's confidence is not shared by all of his colleagues in the scientific and artificial intelligence field.



French physician Julien de La Mettrie (1709–1751) got into a lot of trouble with the church for suggesting that man was little more than an elaborate machine.

More significant than technological readiness, however, is the emotional readiness of people to accept the concept of love and sex with robots. Levy's argument is that this will occur as a logical progression, in much the same way that society came to accept behavioral habits such as masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, sex outside of marriage, and formerly taboo relationships like marriages between members of different tribes, different religions, different races, and the same sex. Normalizing these relationships took many years of struggle for official sanction and societal acceptance. In the case of same sex relationships and marriage, the battle is still being fought on many fronts. However, in many places, homosexuals are now allowed to publicly express their love, to marry, to have the same legal rights as heterosexual couples, and to adopt children. Levy argues quite reasonably that these same battles will be fought and won in the field of human/android relationships.

That people meet, fall in love with and marry complete strangers over the Internet carries us further toward the merging of technology and biology. People are already having relationships with the top of the market sex dolls currently available. A large number of male users seem to concur that they have a deeper relationship with their dolls than a one-way physical encounter. These dolls seem to bring them succor, comfort and companionship, which they have been unable to obtain with real women. Levy sees human/robot relationships progressing gradually but inevitably:

Having robots take on the role of partner in relationships with human beings is a natural continuation of the trend in robotics research and development that has already passed through various stages: from industrial robots to service robots to virtual pets to companion and caregiver robots for the elderly. The next stage in this trend is the design and construction of partner robots, sufficiently humanlike and sufficiently appealing in various ways to be considered as our true partners.³⁰

The idea is not as farfetched as it seems when we consider that many men and some women are already engaged in relationships with artificial partners. In addition, many more experiment with sex toys modeled on the human genitalia, the vibrator being the classic example. Remember the Japanese entrepreneur who operates the sex doll escort agency, and you can begin to appreciate that the segue from robot sex to robot love is possible.

Obviously the mental leap of acceptance will be biggest obstacle.

That robots are living creatures and therefore empathetic will be difficult to accept. This has troubled scientists and writers for many years. The chasm between the living being and the android is in the synapses. Many experts argue that a machine cannot have or develop feelings and emotions. The late academic Roland Puccetti wrote extensively on the intellectual concept of the differences and similarities between a person and other beings such as machines, fetuses, God and extra-terrestrial organisms. His works appear in "On Thinking Machines and Feeling Machines" (*British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, May 1967) and in his book *Persons: A Study of Possible Moral Agents in the Universe*, in which he notes: "What makes a human being's death tragic, or at least often sad, is not so much the cessation of thought as the loss of all feeling, all emotion, all sensation. It is this we mourn, and cannot reasonably expect to result from the destruction of a machine."³¹

Keeping in mind that there have been numerous advances in technology and robotics since the sixties, we can follow the logic of this argument if we consider the general sense of loss experienced by the death of a loved one in comparison with that of a family pet. While after a time the average person would get over the loss (and replace) a deceased animal, the loss of human life has much greater impact. We can only imagine how an intelligent machine (and its potential "death") will fit into this paradigm. The concept is difficult because we cannot currently imagine a machine displaying human emotions like affection, loyalty, humor and love.

It is also difficult to imagine a human being developing feelings for a machine, which has no feelings itself. Some of our literary examples suggest a grudging admiration for the machine. Robby the robot and the unnamed robot in *Lost in Space* achieve the status of "good buddy." The machine portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Terminator II* becomes a surrogate father to John Connor. A thinking machine would have to go through a developmental process to gain acceptance, a transition from machine to pet to sidekick status. A machine might well become intelligent enough to reproduce itself. It might be able to replace human beings in many ways, including as a sexual partner, but likely could not replicate emotions. In his book, Puccetti goes on to say:

If [a machine] cannot have feelings she cannot be a moral object. She cannot be a moral object because without a capacity for pain or pleasure, joy or sorrow, nothing that happens to her will have moral implications....

Thus even the most idealized humanoid machine, if it is really a machine, cannot qualify as a person. What really cuts a machine off from the community of persons is not, therefore, a necessary lack of consciousness, but a highly probable lack of feeling.³²

Levy, however, disagrees with this hypothesis. In his *Love + Sex with Robots*, he conjectures that the robots will learn to have emotions by observing human behavior and adapting or copying it to please their human companion. This is how children learn behavior, by observation to please parents and peers, and how immigrants blend into a new culture by mimicking the social behavior of the local inhabitants. Levy seems ready to accept a leap of faith between learned behavior and innate behavior. The key to the success of emotions in robots will be the willingness of humans to accept and believe in the genuine quality of these feelings in their robot partners. Imagine in this regard a robot which has the capacity to laugh and cry, to display the physical and visual indicators of emotion. Verisimilitude will be one of the keys to greater acceptability, just as the coming of cyber technology sex dolls has led to their much wider use. A doll or gynoid which is physically appealing, or perhaps which is modeled to look exactly like a lost loved one, will be easier to accept as "real." Similarly, once voice technology enables the gynoid or android to express itself in terms and tones which are recognized and approved by the human partner, the machine will more easily gain acceptance.

More lifelike and emotional robots will force human beings to consider the ethics of our interaction with them. If and when robots are considered equal to humans, then issues such as sexual exploitation, consent, rape, and infidelity will come to the fore, as Levy outlines:

If robots become, for all emotional and practical purposes, surrogate humans, will we not have ethical obligations toward them? ... Is it akin to rape if the robot's owner countermands the robot's indicated wish to refrain from sex on a particular occasion? All these examples warn of a minefield for ethicists and lawyers, which partly explains why "roboethics" is becoming a respectable academic topic.³³

Men will have to withstand sexual envy and fear of replacement. Just as men once feared (and perhaps still do) that the vibrator would replace them in the affections of women, so fully functional android sexbots could be better, more efficient lovers than men. If robots and machines can do most things better than men, then they could be

more considerate lovers as well. We see the fear of replication turn full circle. Many conjecture as to if or when machines will become intelligent enough to demand autonomy. Peter Schwartz, co-founder and chairman of Global Business Network, predicts that this will occur sometime around the year 2030:

University of San Diego mathematician and science fiction writer Vernor Vinge ... and others, like the computer scientist Raymond Kurzweil have posited that the tipping point will come when computers are developed with processing power on a par with human intelligence. From there machines will begin to design and build their own machines, outpace the human ability to understand their purpose and processes, and direct the course of progress ever after. "Any intelligent machine would not be humankind's tool," wrote Vinge.³⁴

Interestingly, the fear of robots expressed in western society is not mirrored in the East, where the Koreans and Japanese in particular have always embraced robotic technology with great passion. Part of the reason for this is economic. The Japanese government appreciates the potentially enormous commercial benefits of investing in robotics, particularly in a service and care capacity. Levy points out that where countries like the United States employ cheap immigrant labour, the Japanese create more robots. Industry figures in 2006 indicated that the United States had 68 robots per 10,000 human employees in the manufacturing industry, whereas the Japanese had 329 per 10,000.³⁵ Yet the differences are more than just economic, they are also cultural. The Japanese generally like robots and see them as beneficial. Levy uses religion and popular culture to explain the phenomenon. "Religion plays a role because Shintoism 'is infused with animism: it does not make clear distinctions between inanimate things and organic beings.' For this reason the attitude in Japan is to question not why the Japanese like robots but why many Westerners view robots as some kind of threat."³⁶

The Japanese have always seen robots in a positive light as beings which will aid and benefit humankind. This is reflected in their massive investment in robotic technology and in their burgeoning sex doll industry, where no avenue is left unexplored. Japan's creation of the first sex doll escort agency is a salient point, as is the interest in Manga or anime sex dolls, which symbiotically merges two of Japan's big profit generators, the comics trade and the sex industry.

Electric Orgasm

Despite our long-held cultural fascination with the concept of robot love, the technology being applied to the creation of artificial sex partners still appears a long way from a fully mobile android, although there is much contention over the issue. Henrik Christensen of the European Robotics Research Network agrees with David Levy that humans will be having sex with robots in the immediate future. In a speech at the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm in 2006, Christensen remarked that “people are going to be having sex with robots within five years.”³⁷ However, Frederic Kaplan from the École Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne, Switzerland, who programmed the brain of Sony’s popular robot dog, Aibo, thinks it will be much longer before we start to see realistic humanoid robots. In an interview with the Brazilian science magazine *Galilu* in 2005, Kaplan spoke about the integration of robots into human society:

The imminence of the arrival of robots has been announced so often, that one should be careful in making predictions in that respect. Such evolution may happen, but in a way different from the scenario classically described. In the 50s, in the 60s, in the 70s, many eloquent representations of our future life were showing a happy family of the XXIst century in an apartment literally full of robots: robot maids, robot companions, robot nanny, robot guards. The robots of tomorrow don’t have to be like the one imagined by science-fiction writers of the last century. We can be free to imagine other forms of future life in which we will cohabit with robots, or with entities that only vaguely resemble to what we used to call robots.³⁸

Another academic, the late Joseph Weizenbaum, was wary about man’s growing obsession with artificial intelligence and saw it as a crutch men leaned on to avoid having to think issues through for themselves. In his book *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation*, he argued the case against giving machines the responsibility to make the choices that humans should be making. He opined that it was dangerous and immoral to expect computers to make emotional decisions. Undoubtedly, Weizenbaum would have great moral objection to the concept of people having sex with and falling in love with robots.

The chasm which still exists between society and tolerance of romance

between humans and gynoids is emphasized in the recent feature film *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007). Yet at the same time, this film might one day be seen as a critical step in the acceptance of human/android relationships. It is arguably the first feature film which does not portray a doll as a negative or evil influence on the protagonist. Rather the doll becomes a way for Lars Lindstrom, a shy, retiring, socially inept young man, to work out all of his issues and find a way back into a world from which he previously felt alienated. Bianca, the love doll in the story and Lars's initial love interest, is merely a sounding box by which he experiences the rite of passage of first love and loss. The doll is shown in a mostly positive light and has an unwittingly constructive influence on Lars's emotional development. It is certainly one of the most unconventional love stories in cinematic history and was very well received by the critics. Ryan Gosling as Lars captures the stilted shyness evinced by men who prefer relationships with sex dolls to living, breathing women. The overriding strength of the film is that it neither ridicules the stereotypical doll user nor the doll itself. It allows the relationship to play itself out naturally. The film may well be a turning point in a greater understanding of the relationship between men and gynoids.

Western culture is moving inexorably toward grappling with human/android relationships. The inevitability has accelerated since the first high-end sex dolls appeared on the market in 1996, and since the American, Japanese and Korean governments started pouring millions of dollars into the robotics industry. By examining our philosophical, literary and cinematic history we have witnessed the mental leap society has taken from the horror of the uncanny to the possibility of accepting androids as part of our everyday lives. We are now experiencing the gradual shift of technosexuality from the periphery of popular culture toward the center and mainstream, as our global infatuation with technology and gadgets becomes more natural to each passing generation, until they will come to accept robots as part of their lives — as servants, teachers, friends, lovers, and maybe even as spouses. We are experiencing a cultural shift from the biological toward the mechanical. We should keep in mind that the prime motive of sex doll manufacturers is not replacing women with gynoid replicas as was long feared by our forebears, but rather a combination of profit and the joy of experimenting with technology. As long as the demand remains high, and by all accounts the market is steady

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if not booming, then the supply will continue. In any case, perhaps a fully functioning gynoid/android is not what doll lovers desire. Perhaps what they really want is something that sits quietly and obediently, offering solace and companionship and never uttering a word. It may be as simple as that.

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Conclusion

DISENGAGE FROM SOCIETY AND PLUG INTO THE NETWORK

The Cult of the Self

The early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed a gradual generational shift away from the traditional welfare state toward a more individually conscious, self-motivated and aspiring society. Certainly the rapid advances in technology, especially in communications technology, and its increasing affordability have placed the machinery of the modern world in the hands of a greater proportion of the population. At the same time a diversified access to education means more people have the wherewithal both financially and educationally to interact with new technologies, to take a more active role in engaging with the machinery of the post-industrial world. But while we have never enjoyed more widespread and immediate contact, communication, and online interaction with other people on a global scale, at the same time, because this interaction is electronic, we have also never been so physically isolated from one another. The same individual self-determination that drives us in our pursuit of material happiness also directs how we choose to relate to others.

If there is one thing the modern market has taught us, it is that we have an enormous range of choices. We have surrendered the old tenets of stability, familiarity and predictability for freedom of choice. Greater knowledge and awareness bring us the realization of the capacity for change and the self-belief to foment change in our own lives at our own choosing. The global markets that drive our modern, secular, western society encourage us to seek to fulfill our own individual desires, and one result of this has been a gradual lessening of a sense of community. As a famous expolitician once quipped, we are consumers and not citizens. To put it bluntly, we are less inclined to become involved in meeting the needs and concerns of others, and therefore, more likely to view others in terms of our own particular needs. Not everyone will buy into this mindset, which

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has both positive and negative aspects. The individual has become better educated and thereby more empowered, enjoys a greater range of choices and is more adaptable to change. On the other hand, the individual is more likely to relate to society as a consumer than a contributor to the greater good, and is less inclined to associate with others.

This tendency toward isolation is witnessed both in the workplace and the home. In the former, more of our work is screen-based and self-contained. Developing technologies mean less need for face-to-face communication, less need for physical travel. We are even able to unplug from the workplace and take our work with us wherever we go. In the home we find more of our entertainment is technologically oriented and solitary. We utilize the machinery of the modern world for work and leisure and control our own input. Our children spend less time outdoors interacting with other children in a world perceived as being increasingly dangerous, and more time in front of computer screens and other electronic gadgets inside the home. As these children grow into adulthood, they will come to accept this solitary, mechanical interaction with new technologies as the norm, and it will occupy a greater portion of the work and leisure time of the ordinary person.

The predisposition toward individual personal pursuits is mirrored in the world of sexuality. While regular interpersonal sexual interaction is still the norm, never has there been such widespread availability of non-tactile sexual communication than in our post-industrial world. The technological tools of the computer age have allowed us to interact with one another in a multitude of ways in an impersonal manner, irrespective of physical distance, and they have also allowed us to interact sexually with machines. The growth in ownership of home computers and in online access to virtual worlds has the potential to dull our craving for physical social interaction. Thus we see the increasing popularity of online communication forums such as Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter (and their hybrid successors) as a metonym of the myriad ways in which human beings can meet, interact and connect with others without face to face encounters. The benefit of this form of interaction for the consumer is twofold. Not only is it clean and safe, bringing little risk of disease or disappointment, but its very structure allows the user to retain complete control of the situation. The relationship is conducted in cyberspace. The other person is little more than a collection of electronic impulses, not a

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fully formed human being. Both parties have the sense of being in control. However, this trend toward isolated sexual communication also suggests that inexperienced or developing minds can miss out on the necessary social interaction that traditionally precedes the forming of sexual relationships. This is the same problem that a non-biological partner poses.

What is lost in the tryst with the artificial is the key that the sexual act between flesh and blood partners offers to an elevated state of consciousness. Sex with an artificial partner appears little more than an advanced form of masturbation. There is no communication or exchange of emotion, no bonding of two distinct minds, no touching on a higher level of consciousness that sex at its very best can offer. In his biography of P.D. Ouspensky, Colin Wilson outlines a similar vision of sexual love:

Ouspensky distinguishes between what he calls “infra-sex,” the low form of sexual consciousness in which sex is both “dirty” and comic, and what he calls “normal” sex, which is altogether closer to D.H. Lawrence’s vision of sex as a transformative force. What Ouspensky had recognized is that sexual desire, a man’s response to a woman and vice versa, is one of the best examples of the consciousness of “difference,” and that difference is real, not illusory. A man who sees something of the “eternal feminine” in a woman is seeing her more truly than a man who merely sees her as an instrument of his own pleasure, or a biological organism for continuing the species.¹

There is a strong case to suggest that this heightened state of sensual perception can only be achieved in conjunction with another mind, as a result of harmonious mutual stimulation of an emotional and physical kind. Hence in the attempt to replace men and women and all of their supposed foibles with the ideal artificial companion, humans delude themselves. For in doing so they remove a significant aspect of sexual attraction that makes the eternal pursuit worthwhile, humanity.

To the non-technosexual mind, the relationship with an artificial partner is a state of complete silence and emptiness. A man using a sex doll misses out on a woman’s sheer femininity. Her nuances, her subtleties, her smell, her touch, her voice pattern, her small habits, all the seemingly inconsequential things which can lead to love. What is lost is the simple pleasure of knowing her utterly, not just sexually, but the totality of knowing her, of slowly unravelling her history and sharing yours with her, finding common ground and developing empathy, all this is lost in the relationship with an artificial companion. The relationship between men

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and gynoids is a one-sided exchange. The main purpose of the doll, its major selling point, is its sexual function, therefore it reduces the act of sex to ejaculation and eliminates any threat of uncontrolled female sexuality.

When we examine the handful of serious documentaries which have attempted to portray the relationships between men and their sex dolls, they all seem to reach a similar conclusion. Men who choose to cohabit with sex dolls and reject relationships with women are ultimately lonely. They share an inability or unwillingness to communicate face-to-face with other human beings. The technological age has been a huge boost for these loners, because it enables them to keep in touch with the world without having to endure any real human contact. The preference for a non-responding partner signifies willful detachment from society and psychologically a problem of communication with the opposite sex. On the other hand, avoiding commitment and responsibility is common among people of both sexes involved in biological relationships. Some men in particular are poor communicators and treat women as objects. Thus while I may have drawn a comparison between men who visit prostitutes, rapists, sex killers, necrophiles and technosexuals because each type is drawn toward the non-responding or non-threatening sexual partner, I acknowledge that many kinds of men objectify women. Men who decide to use sex dolls do so for many different reasons. It is also important to acknowledge that I have restricted this study to the male response to sex dolls without investigating the psychology behind the female attraction to male sex dolls and androids.

Love

Daphne Du Maurier said, "Women want love to be a novel; men a short story." In an earlier chapter, I suggested that man's desire for control over his partner and for her unchanging perfection is a striving against the very issue of change, the impermanence of things, and the pace of life. Such men may also be struggling against the illusory status of love itself. Some men find it difficult to accept that women may fall out of love. To these men, this sense of free will in a partner is regrettable. A woman should love unconditionally, and her feelings should never fade, no matter how she is treated. Such relationships merely indicate self-love, a selfish

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rejection of emotional possibilities. The psychologist Abraham Maslow has theorized on the matter of one-sided love:

The absence of love certainly stifles potentialities and even kills them. Personal growth demands courage, self-confidence, even daring; and non love from the parent or the mate produces the opposite, self-doubt, anxiety, feelings of worthlessness and expectations of ridicule, all inhibitors of growth and of self-actualisation.²

The relationship between man and gynoid is a power-based relationship. Therefore it quashes any notion of love, because love springs from equality. Mutual respect begets equality, but the gynoid offers only servility. Man's desire for the artificial partner reflects a psychological need to capture and retain female beauty for eternity. It is as if he wants to freeze his loved one in the moment, to refuse to let the ravages of time age and weary her, or sully the memory of her physical beauty. It represents a forlorn effort to hold on to a concept of feminine beauty which is transient. It is an attempt to mechanize an ultimately human process. It rejects the emotional quality of femininity in preference to the mechanical sexual function of the beautiful object.

Over the course of this book I have tried to illustrate how far we have come in producing artificial replacements for the female of our species. It is evident that the rapid development of our technology has produced some incredible improvements in verisimilitude over a short period of time. While the concept of android sex partners is still in its infancy, we are almost at the point of asking ourselves if we are wise in moving down this path of human sexual development, before we reach a juncture from which there may be no return. To paraphrase Alvin Toffler, in the future, the choices will not be scientific or technical. They will be ethical, moral and political.³ We may eventually live in a world where machines learn to think for themselves and demand some sort of autonomy, as foreshadowed in science fiction stories like *Rossum's Universal Robots*, *Blade Runner*, *Terminator*, and *Bicentennial Man*. Perhaps man will face his greatest irony when the gynoid sex partner becomes sentient enough to demand what flesh-and-blood women have always asked for, equality. The problem of the sex doll relates to Freud's theory on the uncanny, the fear that the bridge between the living and the artificial will become impossible to decipher. In the current immutability and the stillness of the artificial partner is an absence of emotional exchange, and thus, no possibility of change

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or growth. What gives this concept we describe as love its power is mutability and fragility. This is what makes it worth striving for, the unpredictability and magic of the human condition, with all of its wonderful flaws and imperfections.

Ultimately technosexuality is no more or less distasteful or antisocial than myriad other obscure sexual practices. There is no single, stereotypical sex doll user. These curious, ever-evolving objects are desired by some for their artistic quality, by others for their complicit silence. The technosexual admires their cold, emotionless, robotic texture, while lonely men appreciate avoiding rejection from the non-responding gynoid. For some older men the doll is the only acceptable replacement for an irreplaceable beloved spouse, while for others, they are simply very realistic sexual toys to be enjoyed for physical pleasure. The later-model, high-end sex doll is undoubtedly an object of beauty in itself, a work of great craftsmanship and artistic merit. Yet we cannot separate it from its basic sexual function. Here is the basic fear: if it is possible to go from the cradle to the grave without ever experiencing an intimate relationship with another living being, then we will surely stagnate as a species. If you move through life without considering the possibility of ever falling in and out of love, without listening, caring, communicating, experiencing rejection and disappointment, exhilaration and joy, without sharing your experience with another human being at some time, then perhaps you haven't really lived at all.

Yet despite all of my preconceived notions of what a stereotypical sex doll user must be like, despite what I assumed they must lack, I found enlightening my research and personal contact with some of them. They don't fit into one box, for they use dolls for many different reasons. Yes, loss and loneliness and an unwillingness to communicate or a social awkwardness play a role in their lifestyle choice. However, the dolls seem to offer some people a peaceful companionship in solitude, a veil of comfort in a sometimes cold and unforgiving world. Ultimately theirs is not a lifestyle choice that is forced upon anybody, so for them it remains a positive experience.

CHAPTER NOTES

Chapter 1

1. In this regard see Jon Stratton's definition of the gynoid in *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*, 21.

2. Brenda Love, *Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices*, 119.

3. Love, 5–6.

4. Love, 5. See also David Levy's *Love + Sex with Robots*, 177.

5. Love, 268.

6. Gaby Wood, *Living Dolls*, 51.

7. The British criminologist Colin Wilson explores this theme in several of his books. See for example his chapter "Pornography and the Rise of Sex Crime" in *A Plague of Murder*, 1–30.

8. As reported in *Flying for Her Country: the American and Soviet Women Military Pilots of WWII* by Amy Goodpaster Strebe. Uhse-Rotermund was a pilot in war-torn Germany before establishing a career in the sex industry.

9. For a full historical analysis of the vibrator, see Rachel Maines's *The Technology of Orgasm*.

10. An early account of this paraphilia is discussed in Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 37–40.

11. Amy Wolf, "Dames de Voyage."

12. Gaby Wood, *Edison's Eve*, 3–8.

13. The medical term given to the two glands located just under the vaginal opening, which provide the necessary secretion to allow sexual intercourse to proceed. They are named after their discoverer, the seventeenth-century Danish anatomist, Caspar Bartholin the Younger (1655–1738).

14. Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time in its Relations to Modern Civilization*, 648–649.

15. Rene Schwaebler, *Les Detraquees de Paris. Etudes documentaires*, 247–253.

16. Schwaebler, 247–253.

17. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 15–16.

18. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 54.

19. As cited by Levy in *Love + Sex with Robots*, 237–239.

20. Levy, 239. No page reference given for original text.

21. Alfred Weidinger, *Kokoschka and Alma Mahler*.

22. As noted by Peter Wollen in "Cinema/Americanism/the robot," 16.

23. Stratton, 220–221. Stratton quotes from Kokoschka's *My Life*.

24. Oskar Kokoschka, *My Life*, 117.

25. Wollen, 16. Wollen references Peter Webb's *Hans Bellmer* (London: Quartet Books, 1985) and *Hans Bellmer, Photographer* (Centre Georges Pompidou catalogue, Paris, 1983).

26. Bobbie Hedrick, "Who is Hans Bellmer?" (blog about Bellmer's work), sbcgal@geocities.com 17 March 1999.

Chapter 2

1. This story was reported widely across the Internet and often crops up under a generic search on sex dolls.

2. Norbert Lenz, "The Borghild-project — a discreet matter of the III. Reich."

3. Ibid.

4. Ryann Connell, "Durable Love Dolls Turn Amazing Tricks, but at a Fat Price." For a detailed explanation of the term, see Alan Pate's *Ningyo: The Art of the Japanese Doll* (Boston: Tuttle, 2005), and Pate's own source, Mitamura Engyo's *Takeda Hachidai — Eight Generations of the Takeda Family*.

5. Levy, *Love + Sex with Robot*, 249. Levy quotes from Alan Pate.

6. See M.G. Lord and this quote from Tracey Quan in *Whores and Other Feminists*

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(New York: Routledge, 1997) edited by Jill Nagle.

7. See the artist's Web site at www.albertcrib.com

8. See *Conegate v. Commissioners of Customs and Excise* (No 121/85) Queen's Bench (1987) 254.

9. Bob Greene, "So much loneliness," *The (Fredericksburg, Va.) Free-Lance Star*, 3 October 1977.

10. *The New York Times*, 4 December 1976, 10.

11. An Internet search for "inflatable dolls" turns up models based on popular celebrities such as Sarah Jessica Parker, Sarah Palin, and Paris Hilton, among others.

Chapter 3

1. "Making the Dead," *The Weekend Australian Review Magazine*, 4–5 September 2004, 24–25.

2. Daffyd Roderick, "Well, Hello, Dolly," *Time Magazine* 157:22 (4 June 2001).

3. Interestingly, one of the advertised features of the RealDoll is "stress-free companionship." That the doll lies before its user motionless and silent allows us to conclude what we will from this term.

Chapter 4

1. Steven Johnson, *Everything Bad is Good For You*, 124.

2. Peter Schwartz, *Inevitable Surprises*, xii.

3. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, 71.

4. Lisa Palac, *The Edge of the Bed*, 108. Palac was the first editor of *Future Sex*, a short-lived magazine dedicated to the exploration of cybersex.

5. Anneli S. Rufus, *Party of One*, 90.

6. Nelson found fame as the inventor of hypertext.

7. Levy, *Love + Sex with Robots*, 264. Another, lesser-used term is cyberdildonics.

8. Palac, 77.

9. Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Reality*,

347. See in particular Chapter 16, "Teledildonics and Beyond," 345–377.

10. Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 248. Kendrick quotes from Gisele Freund's *Photography and Society* (Boston: David Godine, 1980).

11. Linda Williams, *Hard Core*, 285.

12. As emphasized in "A Liberal Dose of Drugs and Porn," *Socialist Worker*, 21 March 2003, 9.

13. Paul Wilson, *In Defence of Pornography*, 53.

14. Kendrick, 248–249.

15. See in particular the section on masturbation in Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 188–190.

16. Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm*, 82–83.

17. The Andy Doll is the invention of German airplane mechanic Michael Harri-man.

18. As quoted in Wade O'Leary, "The Missing Kink," *Australian Penthouse*, August 2006, 72.

19. Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*, 94.

20. Mike Mosher, "Teledildonic Temptations: The Rise and Fall of Computer Sex."

21. *Ibid.*

22. You can find KISS dolls at <http://www.msen.com/~crandall/playkiss.html>.

23. Barbara Creed, *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, 2–3.

24. As quoted in Fred Botting, *Sex, Machines and Navels*, 90.

Chapter 5

1. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

2. As noted in Caroline Goodfellow and Faith Eaton, *The Ultimate Doll Book*.

3. M.G. Lord, *Forever Barbie*, 16.

4. Wikipedia reports that this doll is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

5. These examples of early European automatons are discussed in David Levy's *Love + Sex with Robots*, 2–6, and throughout Gaby Wood's *Living Dolls*.

6. Levy, 3–4.

7. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 17. See also a lengthy discussion of Vaucanson's work, 15–29.

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8. Wood, *Living Dolls*, xiii–xiv.
9. Alex Boese, *The Museum of Hoaxes*, 48–49.
10. Levy, 5.
11. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 154.
12. Ibid., 209.
13. Ibid., p.6.
14. Margaret Iversen, “The Uncanny,” 2.
15. Masahiro Mori, “The Uncanny Valley,” 33–35.
16. Stephen Heath, *The Sexual Fix*, 107.
17. Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*, 223.
18. As quoted by Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth*, 12.
19. Ibid., 162.
20. Ibid., 173.
21. Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 18.
22. Monica Videnieks, “Addicted to Surgery,” *The Australian*, 11 August 2003.
23. Dr. Mark Duncan-Smith, “The Dangers of Drive-through Surgery,” *West Australian*, 25 February 2004, Health & Medicine, p. 4.
24. Baxter, Sarah, “Cut Off Toes to Fit Your Shoes,” *The Australian* 11 August 2003 (reprinted from *Sunday Times*, New York), p. 3. This was a story about an American woman who spent \$10,000 on foot surgery in order to fit into the latest type of fashionable shoe, which happened to be severely restrictive and uncomfortable. In effect, she had part of her second toe removed.
25. Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 253 and 257.
26. Ariel Levy was interviewed by Rosemary Neill in the *Weekend Australian* newspaper, 15–16 October 2005, Review supplement, p. 3.
27. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, 101.

Chapter 6

1. Martha C. Nussbaum, “Objectification,” in *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, 387–388.
2. Stephen Heath, *The Sexual Fix*, 154.

3. Jean Kilbourne, “Advertising and Disconnection,” in *Sex and Advertising: Perspectives on the Erotic Appeal*, 174.
4. Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*, 98.
5. Ibid.
6. Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, 26.
7. Ibid., 45.
8. McLuhan, 99.
9. Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 144.
10. As quoted by Bataille in *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, 49–50 and 168.
11. Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 301.
12. Bataille, 53.
13. Heath, 112.
14. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 102.
15. Peter Wollen, “Cinema/Americanism/The Robot,” 7–8.
16. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, 304–05.
17. “We Must Make This a Thing of the Past,” brochure produced by Save the Children, 2009.
18. Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 55.
19. Sigmund Freud, “Totem and Taboo,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 12, 198.

Chapter 7

1. Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 119.
2. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 11.
3. As quoted in Giles Emerson and Bettany Hughes, *Sin City*, 35–36.
4. Walter M. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 18.
5. Ibid., 97.
6. This passage quoted in part in Alan Rusbridger, *A Concise History of the Sex Manual*, 108.
7. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 136.
8. Linda Williams, *Hard Core*, 204. Williams paraphrases Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”
9. Paul R. Wilson, *In Defence of Pornography*, 26.
10. Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians*

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(New York: Basic Books, 1974), as quoted in Williams, *Hard Core*, 154.

11. This point made by Danielle Myers in "Who Said Porn is a Dirty Word?," 20. Myers quotes from Nadine Strossen's *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

12. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum*, 237.

13. David Marr in Philip Adams, ed., *The Retreat from Tolerance*, 143.

14. Caroline Overington, "The Porn Plague," *The Australian*, 24–25 June 2006, 19.

15. Laurence O'Toole, *Pornocopia*, back cover.

16. Alan McKee, Katherine Albury, and Catharine Lumby, eds., *The Porn Report*.

17. Stephen Bayley, *A Dictionary of Idiocy*, 87–88.

18. From the Dutch word *manneken*—"little man."

19. Gail Reekie, *Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store*, 142–143.

20. *Ibid.*, 177.

21. Theophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, 170.

22. *Ibid.*, 177.

Chapter 8

1. David Levy, *Love + Sex with Robots*, 211.

2. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, 51.

3. Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*.

4. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 153.

5. Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm*, xiii.

6. *Ibid.*, 2.

7. Giles Emerson and Bettany Hughes, *Sin City*, 214.

8. Maines, xiv.

9. Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*.

10. Lisa Palac, *The Edge of the Bed*, 21.

11. See www.cabuffalo.edu and www.rotten.com.

12. See the chapter "Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death" in Elizabeth A. Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, 278–299.

13. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, 38–39.

Chapter 9

1. Brenda Love, *Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices*, 119.

2. Colin Wilson, *A Plague of Murder*, 334–335.

3. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, 20.

4. Meghan Laslocky, "Just Like a Woman," *Salom.com*, 19 April 2008.

5. Abraham Howard Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*.

6. George Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*.

7. Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*, 100.

8. Colin Wilson, *Mysteries* (New York: Putnam, 1978), p. 436.

9. Georges Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, 40.

10. Colin Wilson, *A Plague of Murder*, 356.

11. As reprinted in Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner, *Men's Lives*, 402.

12. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 150.

13. Bataille, 72.

14. Stephen Heath, *The Sexual Fix*, 25.

15. As quoted in a review of Simon Blackburn, *Lust* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004) by Nicholas Blincoe, published in the *West Australian* newspaper, 10 April, 2004.

16. Wilson, *A Plague of Murder* p.373.

17. Wilson, *A Plague of Murder*, 428–429.

18. Dr. Christopher J. Kurtz and Robert D. Hunter, *Dark Truths—Modern Theories of Serial Murder*, 40 and 48.

19. Wilson, *A Plague of Murder*, 433.

20. Bataille, 11.

21. *Ibid.*, 17.

22. *Ibid.*, 44.

23. Wilson, *A Plague of Murder*, 373–74.

24. Quoted in Anthony Storr, *Human Destructiveness*, 21.

25. Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time in its Relations to Modern Civilization*, 647.

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26. See www.burknet.com/robsfantasy/
27. See the chapter "The Unrepentant Necrophile," in Adam Parfrey, ed., *Apocalypse Culture*, 28–35.

28. See www.burknet.com/robsfantasy/
29. According to Rosman and Resnick, "Sexual Attraction to Corpses: A Psychiatric Review of Necrophilia," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry Law* 17 (2), 1989: 153–163.

30. www.geocities.com/necrophiliaus/leilah. Wendell runs an organization called the American Association of Necrophilic Research and Enlightenment.

31. Brian Masters, *The Evil That Men Do*, 80–81.

32. The notion of active male and passive female sexuality was originated by the American psychologist Colin Scott in 1896, as part of what he termed the "primary law of courting." See Colin Scott, "Sex and Art," *American Journal of Psychology* 7 (1896), 207.

Chapter 10

1. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 43.
2. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ix.
3. *Ibid.*, x.
4. A synopsis of each of these films can be found at www.fantasticfiction.co.uk
5. *Bladerunner*, 1983.
6. Phillip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, 222.
7. Laurence O'Toole, *Pornocopia*, 89–90.
8. According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), TV.com and TVRage.com.
9. Harold Schechter and David Everitt, eds., *The A to Z Encyclopedia of Serial Killers*, 102.
10. Barbara Creed, *Media Matrix: Sexing the New Reality*, 21.
11. Vince Aletti, "Show World," *The Village Voice*, 31 January 2005.

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1. As quoted in S.T. Joshi and Stefan Dziemianowicz, eds., *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia*, 342.

2. Wood, *Living Dolls*, xiv. Wood quotes from the *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud.

3. Leonard Wolf, ed., *Doubles, Dummies and Dolls: 21 Terror Tales of Replication*, ix.

4. Anton Chekov, *The Crooked Mirror and Other Stories*.

5. As reprinted in Leonard Wolf, ed., *Doubles, Dummies and Dolls: 21 Terror Tales of Replication*, 58.

6. First published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1859. This version in Peter Tremayne, ed., *Wondersmith and Other Macabre Tales*.

7. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 229. Discussion of Browning's *Freaks* forms part of the chapter "The Doll Family," 203–250.

8. Leonard Wolf, ed., *Doubles, Dummies and Dolls: 21 Terror Tales of Replication*, x.

9. As related in S.T. Joshi's biography, *Ramsey Campbell and Modern Horror Fiction*, 93.

10. Ramsey Campbell, *Scared Stiff*, 23. The story "Dolls" was originally published in 1976 in *The Fourth Mayflower Book of Black Magic Stories*.

11. Campbell, *Scared Stiff*, 59. The story "Lilith's" was originally published in 1976 in *The Fifth Mayflower Book of Black Magic Stories*.

12. Robert Bloch, "The Model," *Gallery*, November 1975.

13. Nancy A. Collins, "Aphra," published in Michele Slung, ed., *Shudder Again*, 7.

14. As quoted in Wood, *Living Dolls*, 59.

15. Villiers de L'Isle Adam, *Tomorrow's Eve*, 219. As quoted in Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*, 215.

16. Wood, *Living Dolls*, 127. No page references given for Adam's novel.

17. A notion suggested by Stratton, 216.

18. As quoted in a review by Christine Young in the webzine *Flickhead*, 1999.

19. In *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen suggests that Hel's creation as a female is a result of the sublimated sexual desires of Rotwang, 70–71.

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20. Mordaunt Hall, "A Technical Marvel" (review of Metropolis), *The New York Times*, 7 March 1927.
21. Stratton, 21.
22. Huyssen, 70.
23. David Levy, *Love + Sex with Robots*, 2.
24. Levy, 6.
25. Stratton, 210.
26. Gaby Wood, *Living Dolls*, xxii–xxiii.
27. La Mettrie, quoted in Wood's *Living Dolls*, 12.
28. Levy, 140.
29. *Ibid.*, 303.
30. *Ibid.*, 304.
31. Roland Puccetti, *Persons A Study of Possible Moral Agents in the Universe*, 48.
32. Puccetti, 48–49.
33. Levy, 310.
34. Schwartz, *Inevitable Surprises*, 217–218. He quotes from Vernor Vinge's lecture, "Technological Singularity," presented at

the VISION-21 Symposium, March 30–31 1993.

35. Levy, 139.

36. Levy, 140.

37. As reported by Ed Habershon and Richard Woods in "No sex please, robot, just clean the floor," *The Sunday Times*, 18 June 2006, and in *The Economist*, 8 June 2006.

38. Frederic Kaplan, interview in *Galilu* magazine by Vanessa de Sa, 8 June 2005.

Conclusion

1. Colin Wilson, *The Strange Life of P.D. Ouspensky*, 60. Wilson refers to Ouspensky's book, *A New Model of the Universe*.
2. Abraham Howard Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, 98.
3. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, 187.

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